THE 1924 BELGAUM CONGRESS SESSION

A Pictorial Narrative of Mahatma Gandhi's Presidential Debut

Siby K. Joseph
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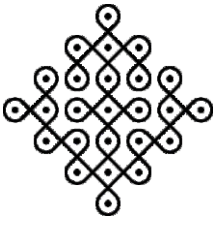

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PREFACE

The 1924 Belgaum Congress Session holds an iconic place in India's struggle for independence, marking the presidential debut of Mahatma Gandhi. This significant event was the 39th edition of the Indian National Congress, held in Belgaum (now Belagavi), Karnataka. Gandhi's presidency was a defining moment, as it was the only time he presided over a Congress session.

Gandhi's leadership transformed the Congress into a mass movement, shifting its focus from elite politics to grassroots mobilization. His presidency provided a significant boost to the Congress, bridging the divide between two factions and bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and faiths to work towards a common goal of Indian independence. As we commemorate the centenary of Gandhi's presidency, we are reminded of his unwavering commitment to communal unity. This pictorial book, a project of the library and research centre of Sevagram Ashram Pratishthan, is a humble tribute to Gandhi's legacy.

This pictorial narrative aims to introduce the younger generation to the significance of Gandhi's presidency and the valuable lessons that can be learned from it. The narrative is presented in a clear and concise manner, making it accessible to readers who may not be familiar with the historical context. By revisiting this pivotal moment in Indian history, the publication hopes to inspire a renewed commitment to the values of unity, communal harmony, amity, and non-violence.Thispublication also explores the key events and decisions made during the Congress Session providing valuable insights into Gandhi's thought process leadership style and his vision.

The idea for this publication arose from a research project from proposed by Basavaraj N. Akki on the significance of Gandhi's presidential debut and an annotated edition of the 39th Indian National Congress Session. This publication is expected to resonate with readers from diverse backgrounds, sparking new interest in Gandhi's legacy and inspiring further research, while promoting a deeper understanding of India's freedom struggle and the enduring values that underpin it.

Siby K. Joseph
Sevagram Ashram
December 4, 2024

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The Sarvodaya International Trust, Bangalore, was keen in bringing this collection of invaluable photographs to light for posterity. We extend our sincere gratitude to the trust's founder, veteran diplomat Pascal Alan Nazareth, and D. Jeevan Kumar, for their generous support and help in this project. Rahul Shinde, CEO of ZP Belgaum, played a pivotal role in connecting the Government of Karnataka and the Belgaum district administration, and we appreciate his efforts in the publication and its dissemination among different cross sections of the society.

We express our special thanks to John S Moolakkattu, Chief Editor, Gandhi Marg, New Delhi Formerly Professor of International Relations & Politics, Central University of Kerala, Director of School of Gandhian Studies at M. G. University, Professor of Development Studies at IIT Madras & Gandhi-Luthuli Professorial Chair in Peace Studies at University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban and D. Jeevan Kumar, Former Director, Centre for Gandhian Studies and Professor of Political Science Bangalore University, Hon. Professor at Karnataka State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj University, Gadag) and Managing Trustee, Sarvodaya International Trust for their kind appreciation of the work.

We thank the Sevagram Ashram Community, including workers and staff members, for their support and help. We also take this opportunity to thank our families and friends who have always been a source of inspiration and constant encouragement.

Siby K. Joseph

Basavaraj N. Akki

The 1924 Belgaum Congress Session : A Pictorial Narrative of Mahatma Gandhi's Presidential Debut

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi's journey into politics began in South Africa in 1893, where he arrived seeking better prospects as a lawyer. During his initial stay, Gandhi encountered racism and discrimination first hand. A transformative moment occurred on June 7th, 1893, when Gandhi was thrown out of a train compartment at Pietermaritzburg Railway Station for refusing to move from a first-class compartment. This incident marked a turning point in Gandhi's life and future work in both India and South Africa. Initially, Gandhi planned to return to India in 1894 after a year-long stay. However, during his farewell party in April 1894, he came across a news article in the Natal Mercury about the Natal Government's proposed bill to disenfranchise Indians. This sparked his interest in politics, and Gandhi decided to stay back and fight against this blatant case of racial discrimination. Within four months, Gandhi, along with other Indians in South Africa, formed the Natal Indian Congress in August 1894. During the Boer War in 1899, Gandhi raised a 1,100-strong Ambulance Corps, comprising 300-400 free Indians and a majority of indentured labourers.

Founders of National Indian Congress Young Gandhi is Standing in the middle

Gandhi's Association with the Congress during South African days

Upon his return to India in 1901, Gandhi attended the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in December and moved a resolution highlighting the problems faced by Indians in South Africa. This marked Gandhi's first participation in a Congress session. However, he was deeply disturbed by the prevalence of untouchability and unsanitary conditions at the Congress premises. Despite his efforts to persuade Congress volunteers to undertake cleaning work, they refused, citing it as the scavenger's job. Gandhi took it upon himself to clean the lavatory he used. By cleaning the latrines, himself, Gandhi subtly critiqued the social hierarchies that existed within the Congress and Indian society at large. Gandhi's return to South Africa in December 1902 marked a pivotal moment in his life. He established himself professionally and politically, founding the Indian Opinion in 1903 to consolidate the Indian community and raise their issues. He also formed the Transvaal British Indian Association in Johannesburg to protest against anti-Indian legislation. Gandhi's experiences during this period had a profound impact on his life. He was influenced by John Ruskin's work "Unto This Last" and established the Phoenix Settlement in 1904. During the Zulu rebellion against the British in 1906, Gandhi raised an Ambulance Corps to serve the wounded, leading him to adopt Brahmacharya and formulate his principle of Satyagraha.

Satyagraha struggles of Gandhi in South Africa

The turning point came in 1906 when the Transvaal Government published the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, requiring Indians to register themselves. Gandhi and the Indian community decided to resist this discriminatory act, marking the birth of Satyagraha. This was just the beginning of several Satyagraha struggles led by Gandhi in South Africa. Gandhi's struggles intensified after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Gopal Krishna Gokhale's visit to South Africa in 1912 sparked hope for resolving the issues, but those hopes were short-lived. The Cape Supreme Court's judgment in 1913, invalidating Indian marriages, sparked widespread outrage. Gandhi resumed Satyagraha, leading to arrests and imprisonment. The Great March in November 1913 pressured the government to appoint a commission, which recommended repealing the £3 tax and validating traditional marriages. The Indian Relief Bill was passed on June 26th, 1914 resolving the issues and ending the struggle that began in 1906. With the final settlement, Gandhi decided to return to India via London, leaving South Africa on July 18th, 1914 and reaching Mumbai on January 9th, 1915.

Great March of 1913

Gandhi’s Arrival in India and Emergence as the leader of Freedom Movement and the Congress

Mahatma Gandhi's emergence as the leader of the Indian National Movement was a gradual process. After returning to India in 1915, he spent a year traveling across the country, learning about its people and their struggles. He established the Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab in Gujarat, with the intention of using non-violent resistance in the Indian soil. This Ashram was later shifted to Sabarmati in 1917. Gandhi's first major public speech in India was at Banaras Hindu University in 1916, where he boldly questioned the dignitaries and patrons of the university, highlighting the stark contrast between the wealthy elite and the millions of poor Indians. This speech marked his entry into India's political scene. Gandhi’s experiences in South Africa had convinced him of the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance. He applied this principle in India, leading Satyagraha movements in Champaran, Bihar, and Kheda, Ahmedabad in Gujarat, to support exploited farmers and labourers. In 1919, Gandhi led the Satyagraha against the Rowlatt laws, which aimed to crush extremist nationalists. The British responded with violence, massacring unarmed protesters at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. This incident transformed Gandhi into a hardcore rebel and non-co-operator.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in Amritsar

Non-Cooperation Movement

By 1920, Gandhi had taken over the leadership of India's freedom struggle. The Non-Cooperation Movement, launched by the Congress in 1920 under Gandhi's leadership was the first mass movement since the 1857 War of Independence, with the goal of attaining Swaraj, or self-rule. Several factors contributed to the movement's momentum. The economic downturn following World War I, the Home Rule Movement led by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre all fuelled anti-government sentiment. Gandhi's support for the Khilafat movement also helped unite Hindus and Muslims. The movement was formally launched on August 1st, 1920, with widespread demonstrations, hartals, and fasting. Gandhi became the undisputed leader of the Congress after Lokmanya Tilak's passing. The Nagpur session of the Congress in December 1920 approved the movement, adopting a new constitution drafted by Gandhi and passed resolutions for the removal of untouchability, the revival of Khadi and the collection of one crore rupees as Tilak Memorial Fund. The movement gained widespread support, with students boycotting government-run schools, lawyers abandoning their practices, and thousands participating in demonstrations and hartals. Five institutions of national education were established to provide alternative education, including Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Kashi Vidyapeeth. Prominent

leaders, including Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, and Jawaharlal Nehru, actively participated in the movement. Many returned their titles and honors in protest, and thousands were imprisoned for their involvement. However, the movement took a violent turn in February 1922, when a mob attacked a police station in Chauri Chaura, killing 22 policemen. Gandhi, saddened by the violence, halted the movement, taking moral responsibility for the outbreak. Nehru described the halting of the movement as a setback and extremely demoralized the workers who were in jail. Despite its abrupt end, the Non-Cooperation Movement marked a significant shift in India's freedom struggle strengthening unity among Indians and highlighted the power of mass mobilization and non-cooperation as a means of resisting colonial rule .

MAHATMA-THE DICTATOR.

VESTED WITH ALL CONGRESS AUTHORITY.

HAKIM AJMAL KHAN ON BRITAIN'S DUTY

Report of Bombay Chronicle

Arrest of National leaders and Mahatma Gandhi

The Non-Cooperation Movement led to the arrest of tens of thousands of people, including prominent national leaders. Many leaders like Motilal Nehru, Chittaranjan Das, Maulana Azad, Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru were imprisoned. Gandhi himself was arrested in March 1922, and charged with sedition. He was sentenced to six years in prison. The 37th Indian National Congress session was held at Gaya in 1922 under the Presidentship Deshbandhu Chitaranjan Das. This Session placed on record its grateful appreciation of the services of Mahatma Gandhi to the cause of India and humanity by his message of peace and truth and reiterates its faith in the principle of Non-violent Non-Co-operation inaugurated by him for the enforcement of the rights of the people of India. In the Gaya session of the Congress, Congress leaders debated on the merits and demerits of continuing its boycott of the government-created councils. While the 'no-changers' led by C. Rajagopalachari and those loyal to Gandhi advocated continuing the boycott, the Swarajists led by C.R. Das suggested participating in the councils. After the Gaya Congress Session, the Congress was divided into two distinct parties-the Pro-Changers led by C.R. Das and no changers by C. Rajagopalchari.

The All-India Congress Committee held a special session of the Congress at Delhi in September 1923. The Delhi Congress lifted the ban on the Council-entry. Then came the elections for the Legislative Councils and the Swarajists gained victories almost everywhere. However, this newfound success threatened the unity of the freedom struggle. Gandhi was still in jail and the 38th session of the Indian National Congress was held at Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh with Mohamed Ali as President from 28th December 1923 to 1st January 1924. Unity was sought to be established between the two wings of the Congress and a compromise was arrived as a result of the incessant efforts of the Ali Brothers. The Kakinada Congress session laid the foundation for unity between the two wings, which was later solidified under Gandhi's leadership in the Belgaum Session.

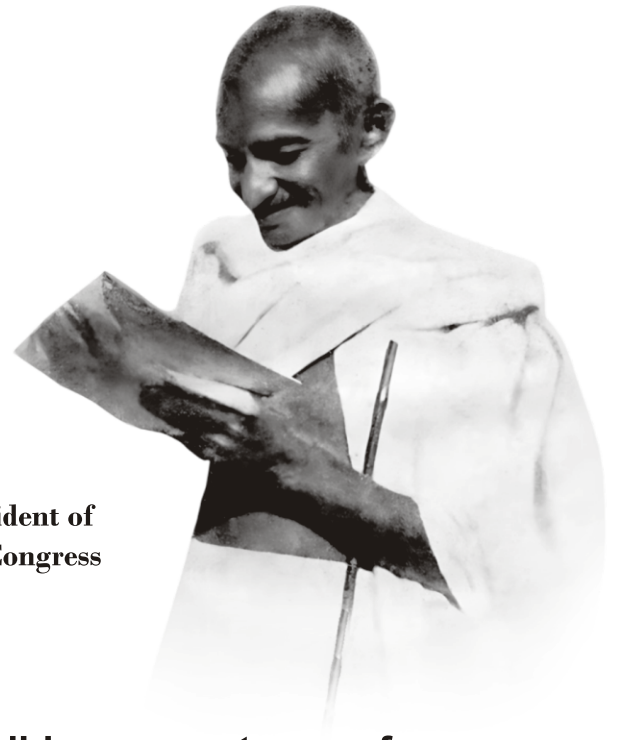
The Selection of Belgaum for the 39th Indian National Congress Session

The 38th session of the Indian National Congress held at Kakinada, a resolution was passed to hold the 39th session in Karnataka. The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee was informed of this decision. Since the inception of the Congress the representatives of Belgaum district used to attend almost all sessions of the Congress. Gangadhar Rao Deshpande had the opportunity to attend the third session at Madras in 1887 along with his father. Gangadhar Rao Deshpande had strong connections with national leaders including Mahatma Gandhi. Deshpande had accompanied Bal Gangadhar Tilak on his visits to Belgaum and Bombay Karnataka. Belgaum was the largest district in the Bombay Karnataka region. The 16th Bombay Provincial Conference held its Session at Belgaum, where the foundation was laid for the unity between the two wings of the Congress of those days, viz. the Moderates and the Nationalists with the result that both the parties once again came under the common flag of the next Congress session at Lucknow. The branch of Home League was set up at Belgaum and also a Swadeshi Store was set up in the city. Mahatma Gandhi also visited Belgaum and addressed the public meetings. Influenced by the principles of Gandhiji, an ashram was set up in his native village Hudli by Deshpande. During the Non-Cooperation Movement a large number of volunteers were imprisoned from the district. The Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee met at Hubli in March 1924 to decide on the venue. Gangadhar Deshpande explained the facilities that were available at Belgaum to host the national session in his district. Other contenders, Mangalore and Bijapur, were proposed by Sadashiva Rao Karnad and Hanumanthrao Koujalagi, respectively. However, Belgaum ultimately secured the highest support after a vote. Finally, Mahatma Gandhi intervened leading to a unanimous agreement to hold the session at Belgaum.

Belgaum currently known as Belgavi

Mahatma Gandhi's Acceptance of Presidentship of the Congress

In February 1924, Mahatma Gandhi was released from jail unconditionally. Later that year, the All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) met in Ahmedabad on June 27th, 1924, where Gandhi presented his Swaraj Plan. He proposed four key points : compulsory spinning for Congressmen, adherence to instructions at subordinate Congress levels, adherence to five boycotts, and condemnation of political murder. Gandhi's propositions sparked opposition from the Swarajists, who disagreed with the spinning clause, arguing that the A.I.C.C. couldn't amend the Constitution. However, after a heart-to-heart discussion, compromise resolutions were passed. Following the A.I.C.C. session, Hindu-Muslim disturbances broke out across the country. Gandhi responded by going on a 21-day fast in Delhi, seeking to restore communal harmony. He broke his fast on October 8th, 1924, after making a statement on Hindu-Muslim unity. Earlier, Deshpande had made a personal request to Gandhi to preside over the Belgaum session when he met him at Ahmedabad. Some Provincial Congress Committees had also nominated him for the honour. Gandhi initially wanted time to consider, but later accepted the nomination. In November 1924, the All-Parties Conference was held in Bombay to promote communal harmony. Gandhi addressed the conference on November 22nd, 1924, and appeal of leaders including Gandhi helped to restore Hindu-Muslim accord across the country. The conference was followed by an A.I.C.C. session, which adopted Gandhi's proposals. Pleased with the outcome, Gandhi decided to preside over the Belgaum session. His acceptance boosted the reception organization at Belgaum, and the session ultimately took place from December 26th - 27th, 1924.



M. K. Gandhi : The President of the 39th Indian National Congress Belgaum, 1924

Mahatma Gandhi on acceptance of Presidentship of the Indian National Congress

Gandhi accepted the presidency, driven by his sense of duty, commitment to unity and non-violence, and faith in the power of mutual toleration and cooperation. In his article "May God Help" in Young India, Gandhi explained that he had decided to accept the honour of presiding at the forthcoming Congress after much prayer, heart-searching, and not without fear and trembling. He acknowledged that there were differences between him and educated India, but he believed that his popularity among the masses and the support of many educated countrymen made it necessary for him to direct the Congress at that critical juncture. As Gandhi himself stated, "I feel that I must not resist them. On the contrary, I must let myself be used, as I hope, for the benefit of the country. "Moreover, Gandhi emphasized his commitment to serving the country, saying: "Anyway, for me to run away from the Congress at the present moment would be cowardice-for me not to accept the Presidentship would be to run away, especially when everybody is trying to make the path smooth for me."Gandhi's primary objective was to promote unity and mutual toleration among different parties and groups. He appealed to representatives of all parties to attend the Congress and give their advice, emphasizing that there was no atmosphere for non-co-operation or civil disobedience on a national scale. Instead, he sought to bring all parties together on the ground of mutual toleration, demonstrating that the Congress non-co-operation was not conceived in or based on hate or malice. Gandhi also emphasized the importance of Congressmen showing their faith in the Congress programme through their personal conduct. He urged them to wear khaddar, practice unity between different religious sects, and show respect for one another's religious observances. He also appealed to Hindus to show their faith in the removal of untouchability by being attentive to those who may attend the Congress.

In conclusion, Gandhi's decision to accept the Congress presidency was driven by his commitment to unity, non-violence, and mutual toleration. He sought to promote a sense of national unity and cooperation, and to demonstrate that the Congress non-co-operation was not based on hate or malice. Through his leadership, Gandhi aimed to inspire Congressmen to work together towards achieving swaraj, and to promote a culture of tolerance, respect, and co-operation.

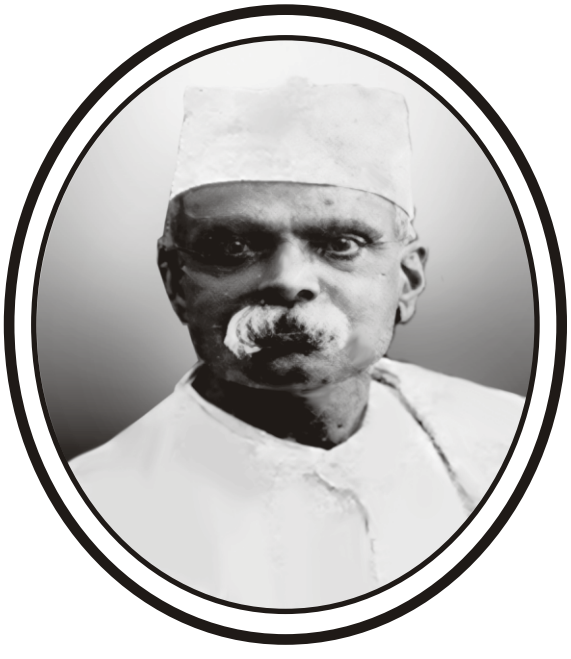
Mahomed Ali handing over charge of the Congress presidentship to M. K. Gandhi

Mahomed Ali expressing his best wishes to M. K. Gandhi as the Congress President

M. K. Gandhi addressing the volunteers, in the background ShukhatAli, Mahomed Ali, Jawaharlal Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad are seen

Gangadhar Rao Deshpande : The Architect of Congress Session

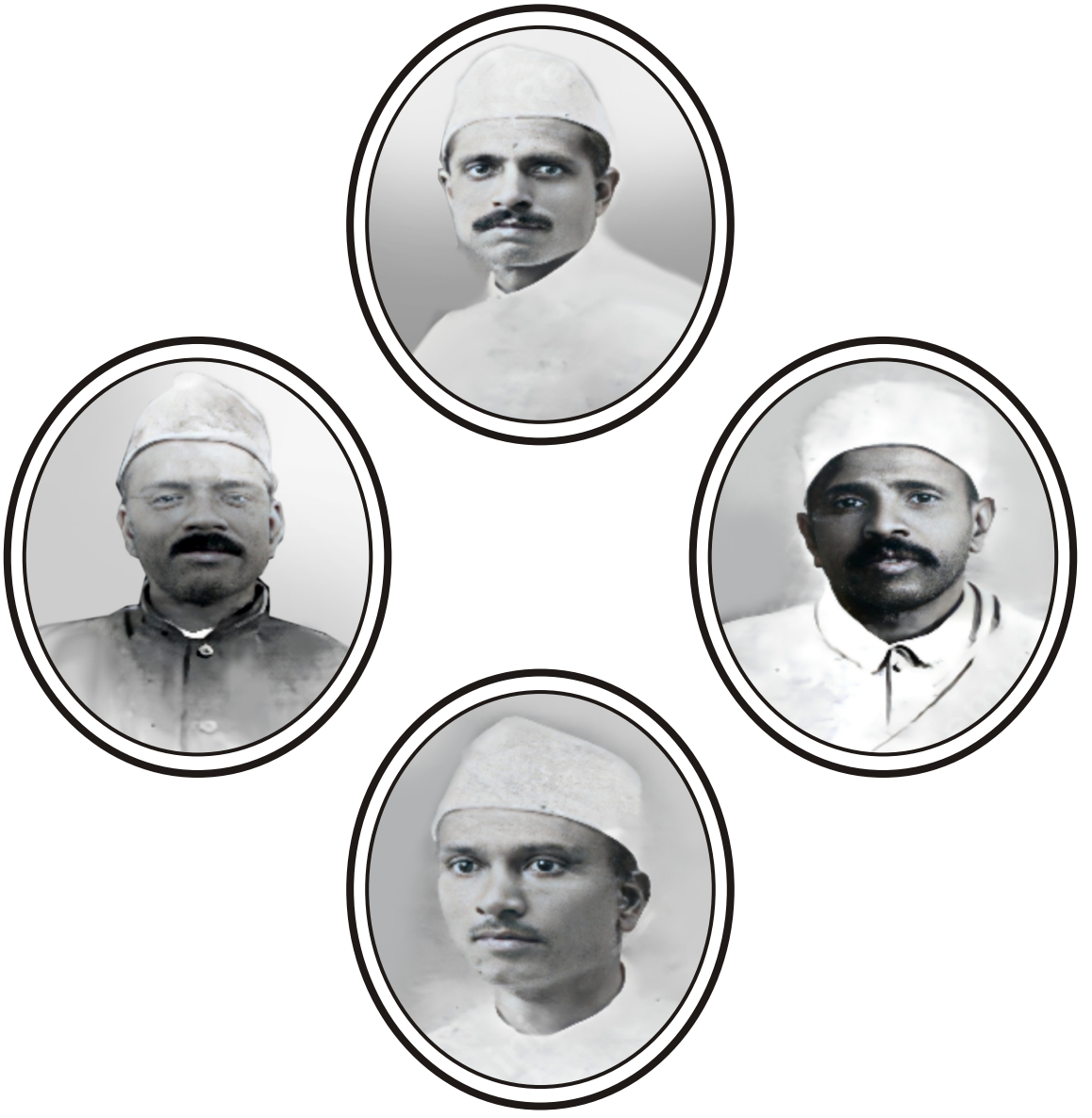
Gangadhar Rao Deshpande was a prominent leader from Belgaum district who played a significant role in India's freedom struggle. Born on March 31st, 1871, in Hudli, Deshpande was inspired by his father, a landlord who trained him in the freedom struggle from a young age. Deshpande's exposure to national leaders, including Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, during his college days in Pune and Bombay, further fueled his passion for the freedom movement. He attended annual sessions of the Indian National Congress and was inspired by the heroism of Kittur Channamma and Baba Saheb of Nargund. Deshpande's contributions to the freedom struggle were multifaceted. He convened the Conference of Bombay Provincial Political conference at Belgaum in 1916, set up a swadeshi store in Pune and Belgaum, and promoted khadi through out his life. He also led the Non-Co-operation, Salt Satyagraha, and Quit India Movement in the region. Deshpande's leadership roles included being the General Secretary of the Kakinada session of the Congress and Chairman of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee. He played a crucial role in organizing the 39th session of the Congress at Belgaum as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Gandhiji and national leaders were very much impressed by Deshpande's arrangements of the Congress Session. He earned the title "Lion of Karnataka" for his contributions to the freedom struggle. Deshpande's legacy as a freedom fighter and a champion of Indian independence continues to inspire people to this day. He passed away on July 30st, 1960, but his contributions to India's struggle for freedom will never be forgotten.



Gangadhar Rao Deshpande : Chairman of the reception committee

The Reception Committee

Deshpande's dedication to organizing the 39th Congress session was evident from the start. He was elected Chairman of the reception committee at its first meeting, with D. V. Belvi, a senior leader, opting to be a Vice-Chairman. Other leaders also took on Vice-Chairman roles, while Madhwa Rao Kembhavi, Bhimarao Potdar, and S. L. Soman worked as secretaries. Dr. N. S. Hardikar led the volunteer corps, ensuring the event ran smoothly. Various committees were formed to oversee different aspects of the Congress session, including accommodations, food, and transportation. With Deshpande at the helm, the reception organization worked tirelessly to make the Congress session a success.



M. R. Kembhavi, General Secretary, B. B. Potdar, General Secretary, S. L. Soman, General Secretary, Koujalgi, Swadeshi Exhibition Secretary

Vijayanagar : Venue of the Congress Session

The venue, Vijayanagar, was named after the legendary Vijayanagara Empire, a testament to Karnataka's power, glorious history andrich cultural heritage. The Vijayanagara Empire, which ruled a vast portion of South India from Hampi, Karnataka, in the medieval period. This mighty empire extended its territories to Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. It was renowned for its patronage of scholars in Telugu, Sanskrit, and Kannada, leading to significant contributions in literature, art, and architecture. The capital city of Vijayanagara empire Hampi, boasts stunning religious and non-religious structures, including monolithic Ganesh and Lakshminarashima statues, showcasing exceptional engineering skills. By naming the Congress session venue Vijayanagar, the organizers aimed to evoke the empire's values of honor, dignity, and sacrifice, while celebrating its enduring legacy in literature, art, and architecture. Mahatma Gandhi remarked "...Vijayanagar was a triumph-not yet of Swaraj-but certainly of organisation".

Vijayanagar : City of Victory

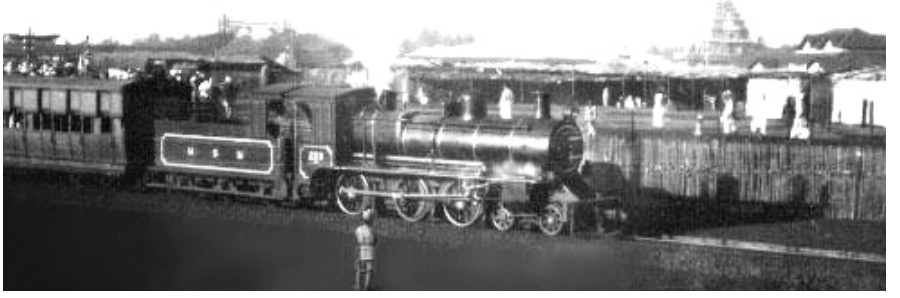
Gandhi Road : A View of the Market

Main junction of the Road

Vidyaranya road to the Lokmanya circle

Vijayanagar Railway Station

The Vijayanagar Railway Station was a temporary station built in Belgaum to facilitate the arrival of delegates from across India for the Congress session. It was a temporary structure built by MS and M Railway Company in the outskirts of the city on the basis of a request from the reception committee. The station was connected to major cities through the railway line, which linked Pune and Bombay in the north, and Hubli and Bangalore in the south. The railway station was built adjacent to the Congress venue making it easier for delegates to attend the session. The construction of the Vijayanagar Railway Station demonstrated the meticulous planning and organization that went into hosting of the session.



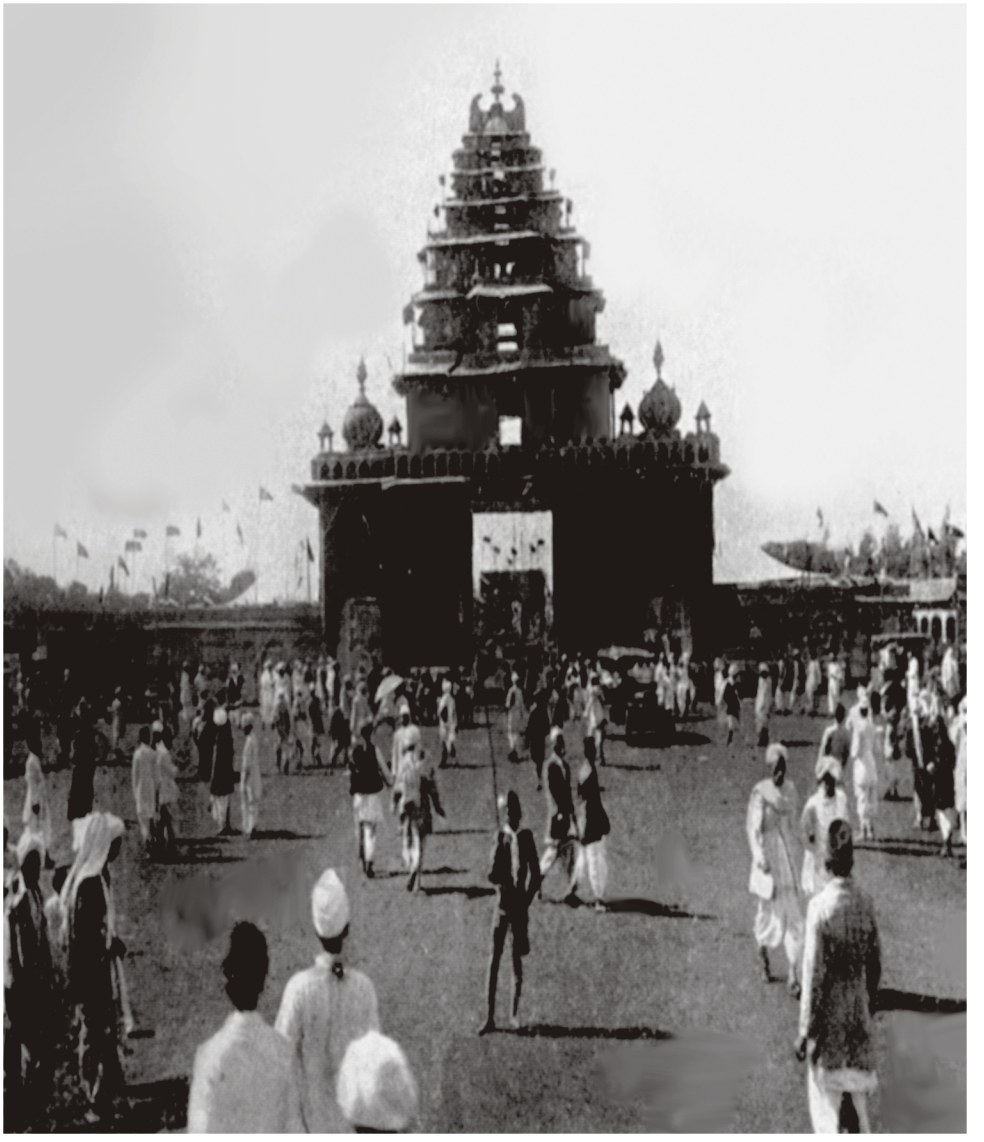
Vijayanagar Railway Station.

Gandhi accompanied by Begum Amjadi Bano and others on way to the Congress Pandal in the vehicle.

Rear view of the vehicle carrying M.K. Gandhi and others.

The Gopura : A Symbol of Freedom and Cultural Heritage

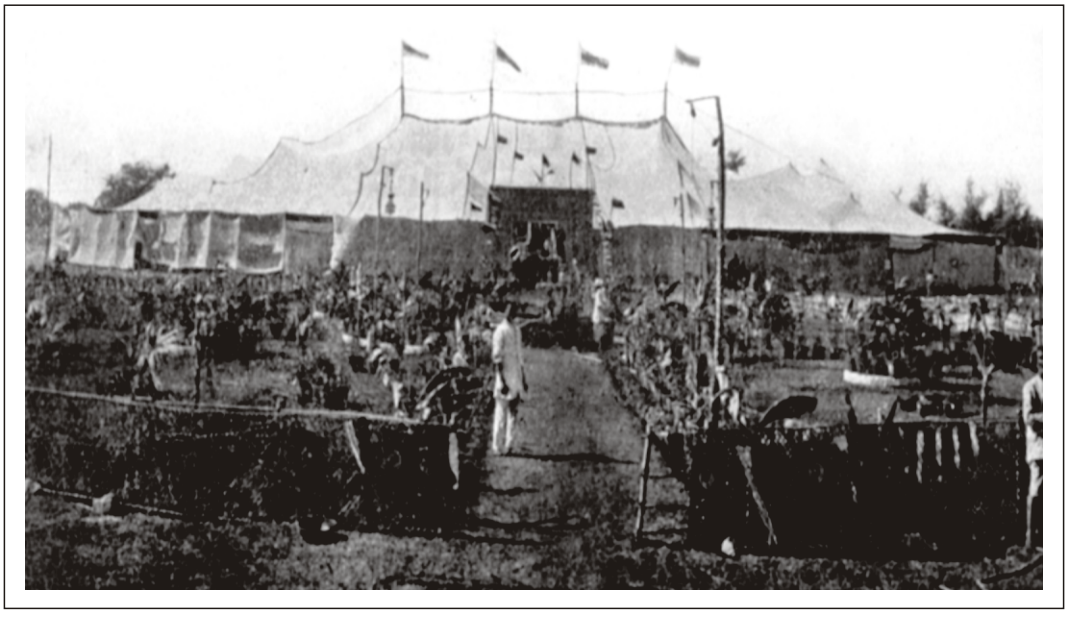
The Gopura, a 70-foot main entrance to the Congress session pandal, was an iconic symbol of freedom and Karnataka's rich cultural heritage. It was designed by a talented young artist from Karnataka who was running Shrinivas and Co., Bombay those days. It was a replica of the iconic Virupaksha Temple tower in Hampi in Hospet taluk of Vijayanagar (formerly Bellary) district. The main tower of the temple was constructed by Shri Krishnadevaraya. The temple exemplified the Dravidian architectural style. The Gopura's intricate design and medieval engineering expertise were showcased through its electric illumination at night, adding to the grandeur of the venue.



The Gopura : The main gate of the Pavilion

The Congress Pavilion at Vijayanagar

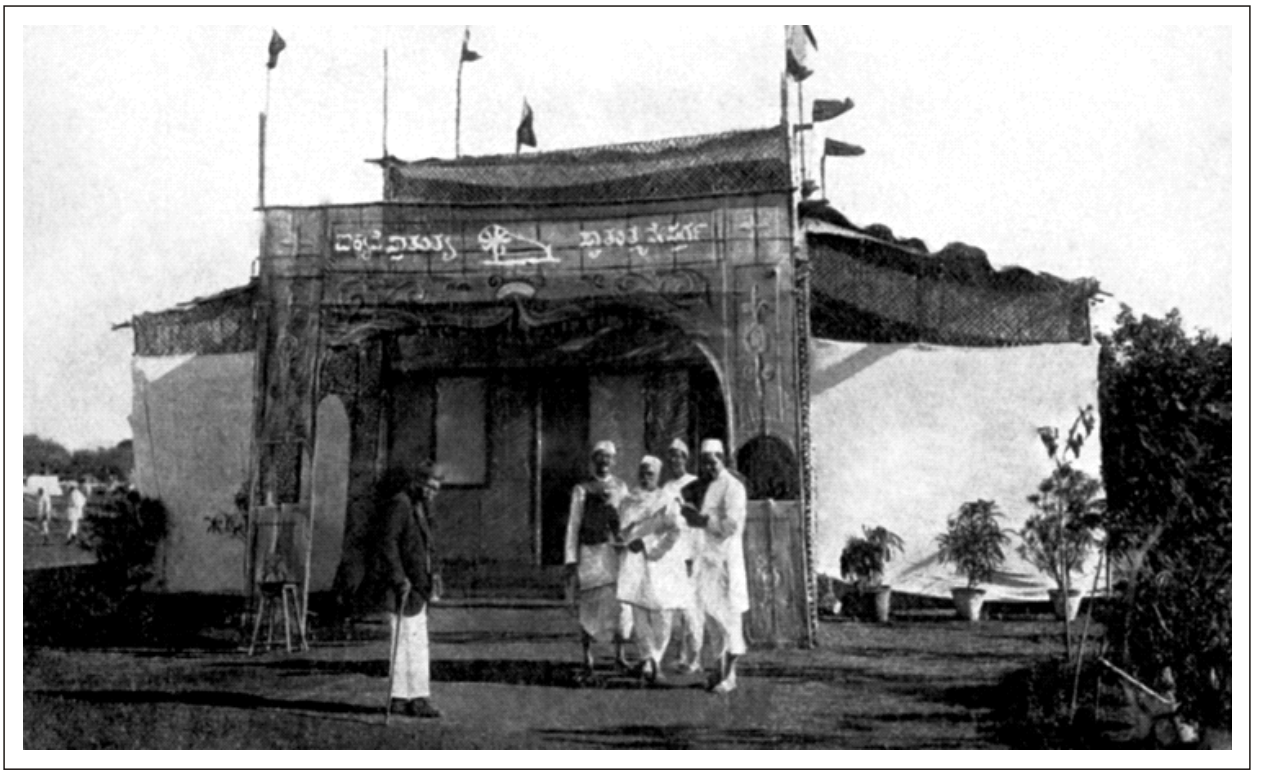
The Congress session was held at the ground of the Belgaum Extension covering an area of about 80 acres. It combined the charm of rural life and amenities of city life. A huge khaddar tent, measuring 300 ft. x 220 ft., was specially made for the Congress by Messrs A. N. Mukerji of Calcutta. This massive tent could easily accommodate 12,000 persons and was considered the biggest pavilion in the world those days. The Reception Committee had secured the tent on hire from the Reception Committee of Kakinada. Later, the All-India Congress Committee resolved to purchase the tent and gallery permanently for the Congress sessions and paid an additional amount of Rs. 13,500, making the total cost Rs. 37,000. The garden with a marble fountain in the centre was artistically laid out in front of the Pandal added to the beauty of the venue.



Front view of the Congress Pavilion and the garden

Vidyaranyashram : The President's Camp

Vidyaranyashram, also known as the President's Camp, was a specially constructed cottage for Mahatma Gandhi during the 1924 Belgaum Congress Session. Located near the Subjects Committee Hall, this abode was intended to be a simple Khaddar hut, but it turned out to be a more elaborate structure. Gandhi humorously referred to it as the "Khaddar Palace," feeling that it was an unnecessary indulgence that didn't align with his values of simplicity and austerity. Interestingly, the organizers thought that while Vidyaranyashram was beautiful enough to be called a palace, its cost was more comparable to a cottage. Despite his reservations, Gandhi did appreciate the allocated floor space and the necessary fencing for his protection from enthusiastic crowds.



Vidyaranyashram - The President camp (Mahadev Desai, Jamnalal Bajaj, Gangadharrao Deshpande and others in front of the camp)

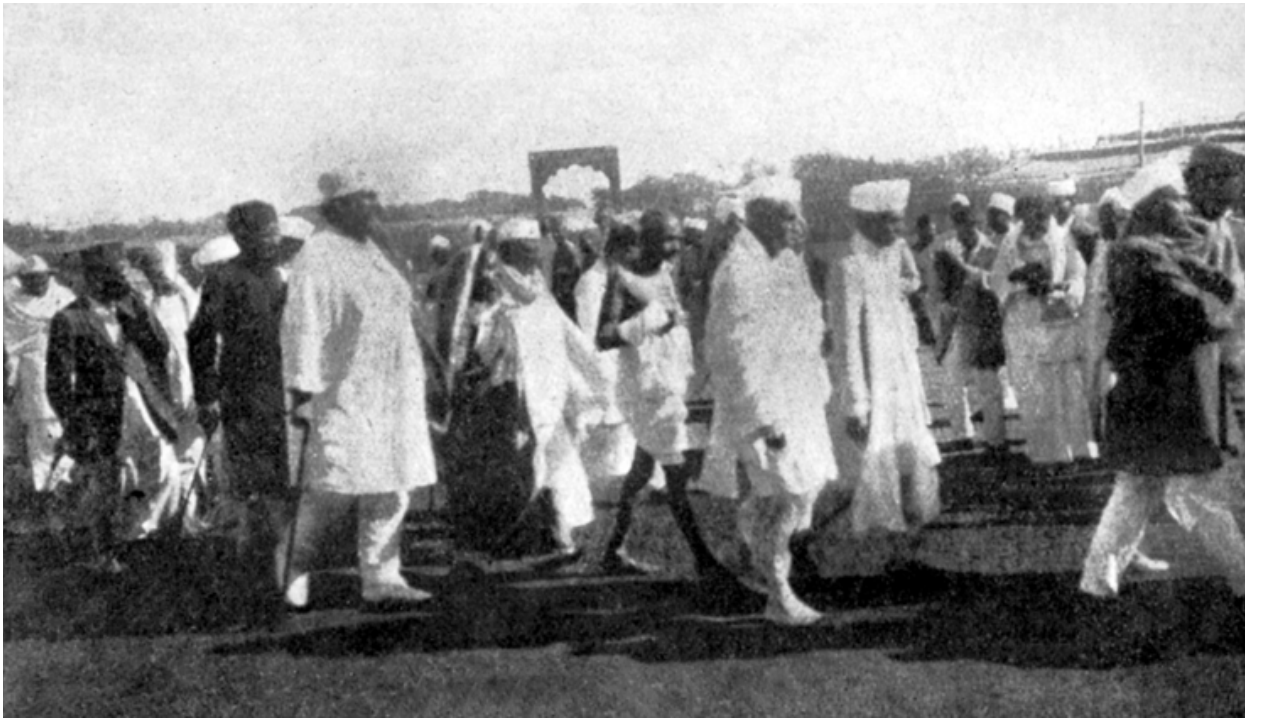
Gandhi accompanied by Begum Amjadi Bano and others on way to the Congress Presidential Camp

The President and the Leaders' Procession

The 1924 Belgaum Congress Session was a historic event that showcased the grandeur of the Indian National Congress. As the Presidential and leaders' procession, led by Mahatma Gandhi, made its way through the Gopura, the crowd erupted in thunderous cheers. The atmosphere was electric, with slogans like "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai," "Vande Mataram," and "Allahu Akabar" filling the air. Under the guidance of Dr. N.S. Hardikar, Commander of the Volunteer Corps, the procession moved in perfect harmony, with leaders like Deshbandhu C. R. Das, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, Gangadharrao Deshpande, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Sarojani Devi, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Motilal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Vithalbhai Patel, T. Prakasham, Rajendra Prasad, K. Venkatappayya Pantulu, Jamnalal Bajaj, Dr. Moonje, A. Rangaswami Aiyangar, and Pandit Javaharlal Nehru among others walking in pairs. Gandhi, dressed in his loin cloth, walked alone, exuding an aura of simplicity and humility. As the procession reached the pavilion, the crowd gave a standing ovation, welcoming Gandhi with open arms. This procession marked the beginning of a significant moment in India's struggle for independence, with Gandhi's leadership and vision inspiring a nation to unite against British rule.

Front view of the Congress Pavilion and the garden

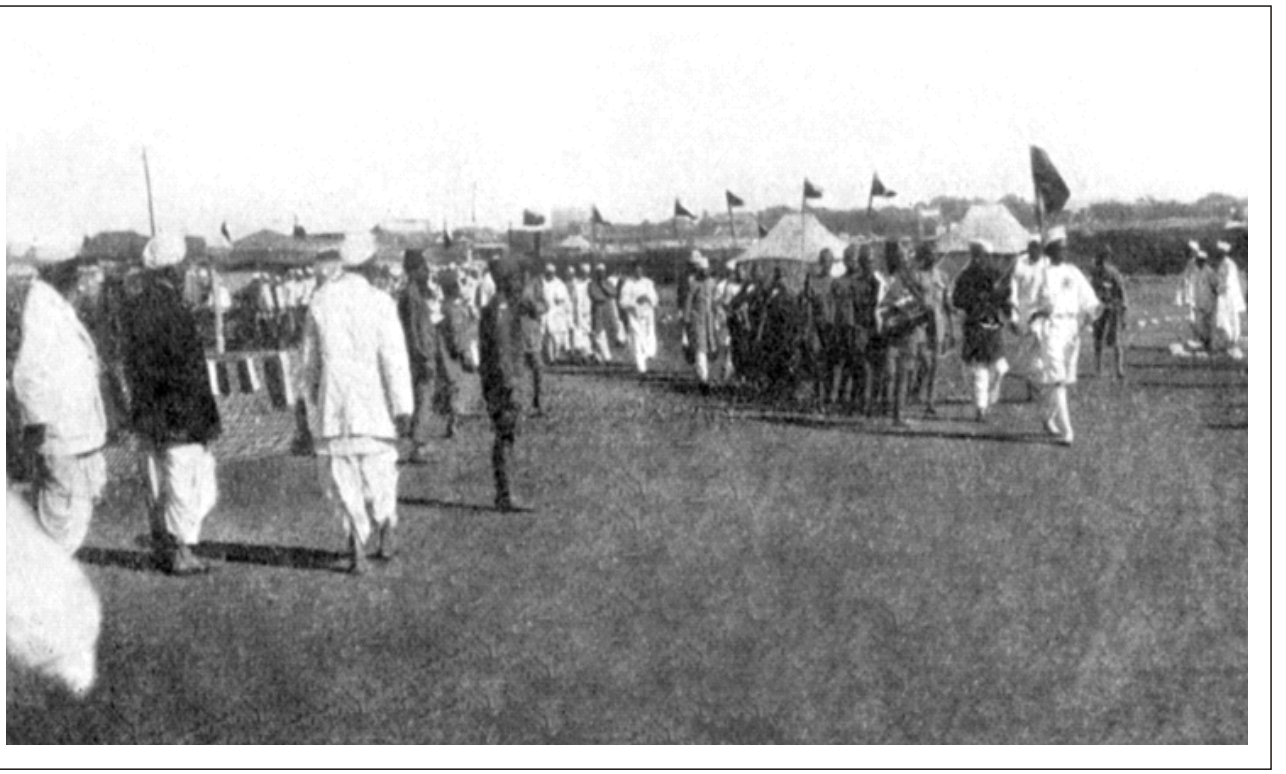
**President & the leaders' procession on the opening day of the Session.
The Gopura is seen in the background.**



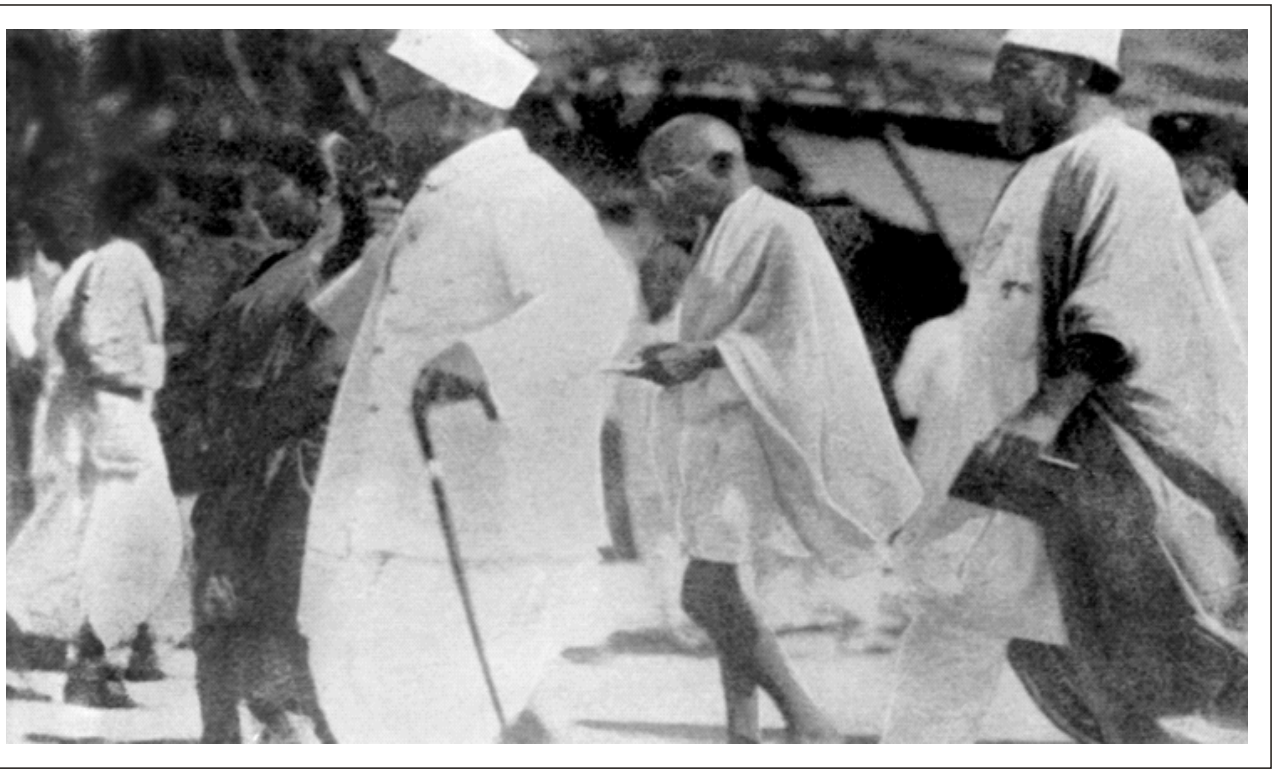
Gandhi, Shaukat Ali, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Gangadharrao Deshpande and others at leaders' procession on the opening day

Mahatma Gandhi, Shaukat Ali, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Gangadharrao Deshpande and others at leaders' procession on the opening day

Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu at the Congress presidential procession with other leaders



A view of the President and leaders' procession on the opening day



Another view of Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu at the Congress presidential procession

Vande Maataram, Welcome Song and Gangubai Hangal 's melodious singing of State Anthem

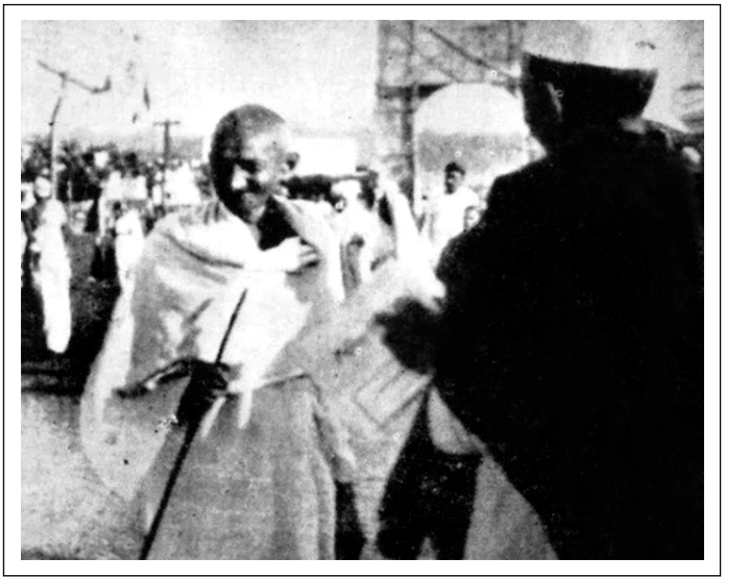
The proceedings of the Congress Session commenced with the singing of the Vande Maataram while all were standing. One batch of girls from National School at Dharwad was assigned to sing the welcome song and Gangubai Hangal who was studying in the same school sang the song Udayavagali Namma Cheluva Kannada Nadu (Rise, our lovely Kannada Land) written by Narayan Huilgol. This song was specially prepared for the Congress session and marked the first time it was used as the State Anthem. Gangubai was just 11 years old and her powerful and soulful voice left a lasting impression on the audience. She was born in Dharwad to Chikkurao Nadiger, an agriculturist and Ambabai, a vocalist of Carnatic music. Her mother initiated her into music at an early age. Gangubai's performance was appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi, President of the Congress session as well as her 'Future Guru' Rambhavu Kundagolkar also known as Sawai Gandharva. This event marked the beginning of her illustrious career as a renowned Indian classical singer, which spanning many decades and earning her numerous accolades.

Gangubai Hangal

Welcome Address of Chairman of the Reception Committee

Gangadhar Rao Balkrishna Deshpande, Chairman of the Reception Committee, welcomed the delegates to the 39th session of the Indian National Congress in Belgaum, Karnataka, in 1924, in a brief speech in Kanada. A detailed printed address in English was circulated among the delegates, which was taken as read. In his address, Deshpande expressed his honour and humility in hosting the event. He acknowledged the challenges faced by the province, including multiple partitions, lack of resources, and difficulties in organizing the event and highlighted the significance of the Congress session. Noting that it was the first time a small town like Belgaum had hosted the event. Further he emphasized the importance of unity among Indians, citing the examples of Hindus, Muslims, and people of other faiths coming together. He also praised the progress made in he production of Khaddar, a symbol of India's struggle for independence. He said, "Fortunately for us, we have amongst us today Mahatmaji who visibly embodies in himself such unity and such leadership, and with him at the helm of our national affairs, I am confident we shall not only be able to recover our lost ground but soon again be in sight of our cherished goal." Deshpande concluded his address by requesting Mahatma Gandhi to chair the session, saying : "It is with feelings, which I find I lack of words to describe, that I request Mahatmaji to take the chair."

Gandhi then walked down from the dais to the rostrum in a loin-cloth and with Khaddar in his hand, amidst enthusiastic cheers. He was presented a copy of the Karnataka Hand-Book enclosed in a sandalwood box by the Chairman of the Reception Committee, with the words "for your information, Sir". He accepted the gift with a "living smile" Gandhi then proceeded to address the gathering in Hindi for ten minutes. By speaking in Hindi, Gandhi was able to connect with a wider audience and convey his message of non-co-operation and promoting a sense of national unity.



Gandhi at the Congress Session

Seating Arrangements

The 39th Indian National Congress session featured seating accommodations similar to the previous session, showcasing the usual national style. The western segment of the pavilion had a raised platform with a beautifully decorated Mandap, adorned with Khaddar and floral wreaths.At the centre of the Mandap was a life-size portrait of Lokmanya Tilak, flanked by life-size portraits of Mahatma Gandhi. The front of the Mandap featured pictures of Vidyaranya, his disciples, and deities of Shiva, Vishnu and Lakshmi symbolic of destruction, construction, and evolution of force. Other notable portraits included those of the Maharaja of Mysore, past and present leaders, and P. C. Ray with his Charkha. Ladies were seated on the right of the Mandap, accompanied by a choir of men in Khaki and women in dark Kaladagi saris. Distinguished visitors, A.I.C.C. members, and Reception Committee members were seated on either side of the Mandap. Delegates sat on the floor, while visitors occupied the gallery all around. Mahatma Gandhi was joined on the dais by several prominent leaders, including Shiva Prasad Gupta, N.C. Kelkar, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, P. Siva Rao, and Janab Yakoob Hasan. Other notable figures present included S. Satyamurti, Purushottamdas Tandon, Pandit Sundarlal, and Shankarlal Banker. Gandhi was received with great fanfare, being profusely garlanded by the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Other leaders were also honored with garlands. The seating arrangement on the dais was carefully planned, with Lala Lajpat Rai and Smt. Sarojani Devi seated to Gandhi's right and Pandit Malviya and Deshbandhu C.R. Das seated to his left. Maulana Mohammad Aliand Maulana Shaukat Ali were seated in front of Gandhi.

Gandhi addressing the volunteers, in the background the National flag is seen

Presidential Address of Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi's presidential address was indeed the shortest in the Congress record. What's interesting is that it was delivered only in parts to the assembly. The address had been circulated beforehand, so it was taken as read. Gandhi's presidential address at the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress in 1924 covered the key issues the nation and the world was facing at that particular historical juncture. In his address he expressed humility and reluctance to accept the presidency, saying : "Friends, it was after much misgiving that I accepted the burden of the honour you have done me today. "Gandhi acknowledged the internal and external developments that necessitated his acceptance of the presidency. He emphasized the need for unity and non-violence, saying : "I swear by civil disobedience. But civil disobedience for the attainment of swaraj is an impossibility unless and until we have attained the power of achieving boycott of foreign cloth. "He defined India's immediate goal as : "The removal, at the earliest possible moment, of any communal or sectional representation. A common electorate must impartially elect its representatives on the sole ground of merit. "Gandhi also emphasized the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, and the promotion of khaddar. He encouraged the youth to become "real soldiers of swaraj," saying : "Go throughout your districts and spread the message of khaddar, the message of Hindu-Muslim unity, the message of anti-untouchability and take up in hand the youth of the country and make them real soldiers of swaraj. "Gandhi also stressed the need for unity among the Swarajists and the no-changers, saying : "If the no-changers and the Swarajists still bear malice against each other, and if they have jealousy against one another, it will not be possible to achieve swaraj. It will be possible only if you bury the hatchet, leave all the jealousies, all anger and all that is bad in your heart. "He further emphasized the importance of unity among the Swarajists and the no-changers, saying : "Let the Swarajists and the no-changers work together in harmony. Let them forget their past differences and work together for the attainment of swaraj. Let them show to the world that they are united in their pursuit of freedom. "In conclusion, Gandhi said : "Let us all strive to be perfect satyagrahis. The striving does not require any quality unattainable by the lowliest among us. For, satyagraha is an attribute of the spirit within. It is latent in every one of us. Like swaraj it is our birth right. Let us know it."

Mahatma Gandhi continued his remarks in English, stating that he wouldn't keep the audience longer than ten minutes. He acknowledged that he had taken more time than intended while speaking in Hindustani. Gandhi also mentioned that copies of his address had been distributed in various languages, so he wouldn't read from it. In fact, his written speech covered a wide range of topics, setting the tone for India's struggle for independence. He reflected on the Congress's transformation from a mechanism for passing resolutions addressed

to the government to an institution focused on developing inner strength. Gandhi discussed the factors leading to non-cooperation and the current halt in the movement, and touched on economic and social issues such as foreign cloth boycott, Britain's duty, foreign versus British, objections to spinning, machinery, spinning franchise, and the message of the spinning wheel. He emphasized the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity, untouchability, Swaraj scheme, independence, and the Swaraj Party, and discussed the importance of constructive work and national issues like maintenance of national schools, unemployed non-co-operators, intoxicants, Bengal repression, and the need for sanction and non-cooperation as an article of faith.

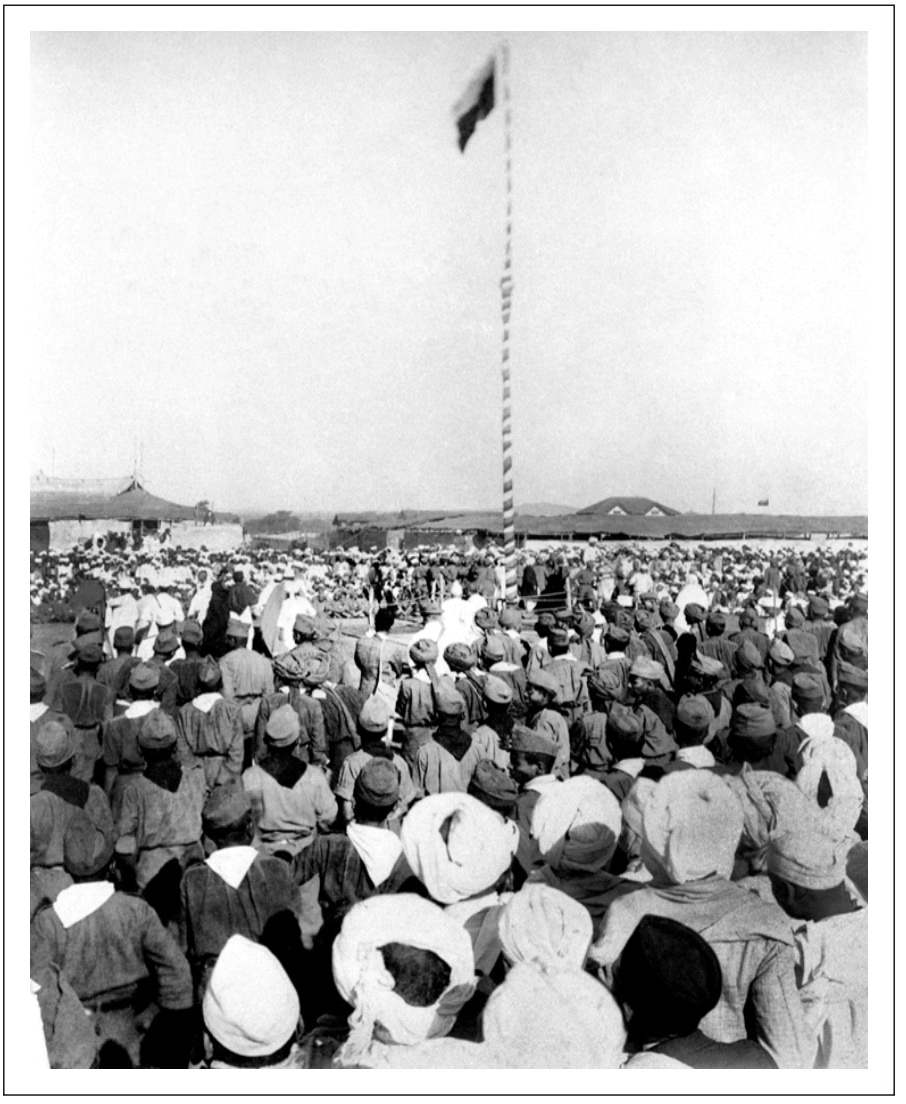
Gandhi delivering the Presidential address

Another view of Gandhi delivering the Presidential address

Gandhi emphasized the importance of the resolution that Deshbandhu Das would present, stating that it was a revolutionary change for the nation. He urged the audience to carefully consider the resolution and to accept it whole heartedly if they believed in it. Gandhi also stressed that the resolution was not just addressed to the nation, but to every individual who was willing to work towards achieving Swaraj. Gandhi concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of sincerity and conviction in working towards achieving Swaraj. He encouraged the audience to be true to themselves and to work together towards a common goal. Gandhi's address was a call to action, urging Indians to unite and work towards achieving independence through non-violent means. His emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, promotion of khaddar, and unity among the Swarajists and the no-changers reflected his commitment to social, economic, and political reform.

National Flag

Gandhi's vision for a unified India led him to propose a national flag that would represent all Indians, regardless of their religious backgrounds. In 1921, he introduced the concept of the "flag of swaraj" with a spinning wheel at its centre, symbolizing self-reliance and independence from foreign markets. This vision was brought to life at the Indian National Congress sessions including Belgaum. A majestic flag staff was erected on the open Maidan, adjacent to the volunteers' camp, and the national flag made of pure khadi with a charkha was hoisted with great ceremony. The flag was hoisted and lowered daily, with the entire camp participating in the ritual. The volunteers, dressed in their uniforms, would salute the flag in a horse-shoe formation, attracting a large crowd of on lookers. This daily hoisting of the national flag was a new tradition in the history of Congress volunteers.



Gandhi during the flag-hoisting at the Congress session

Swadeshi Exhibition

The Committee of Exhibition, led by Secretary H.S. Koujalagi efficiently managed the Swadeshi Exhibition of the Congress session. The committee members included : N.R. Kembhavi, Hoskoppa Krishna Rao, Dr. Savanur, N.H. Dambal, Vamanrao Phatarphekar and Shankarrao Shirgoankar. The Swadeshi Exhibition was held in a 350 x 200 ft enclosure, divided into four sections.

(a). Museum section showcased Indian arts and industries, with exhibits from the Mysore Government highlighting the state's agricultural and manufacturing progress.

(b). Demonstration allowed parties from different provinces to demonstrate processes like cotton ginning and hand spinning.

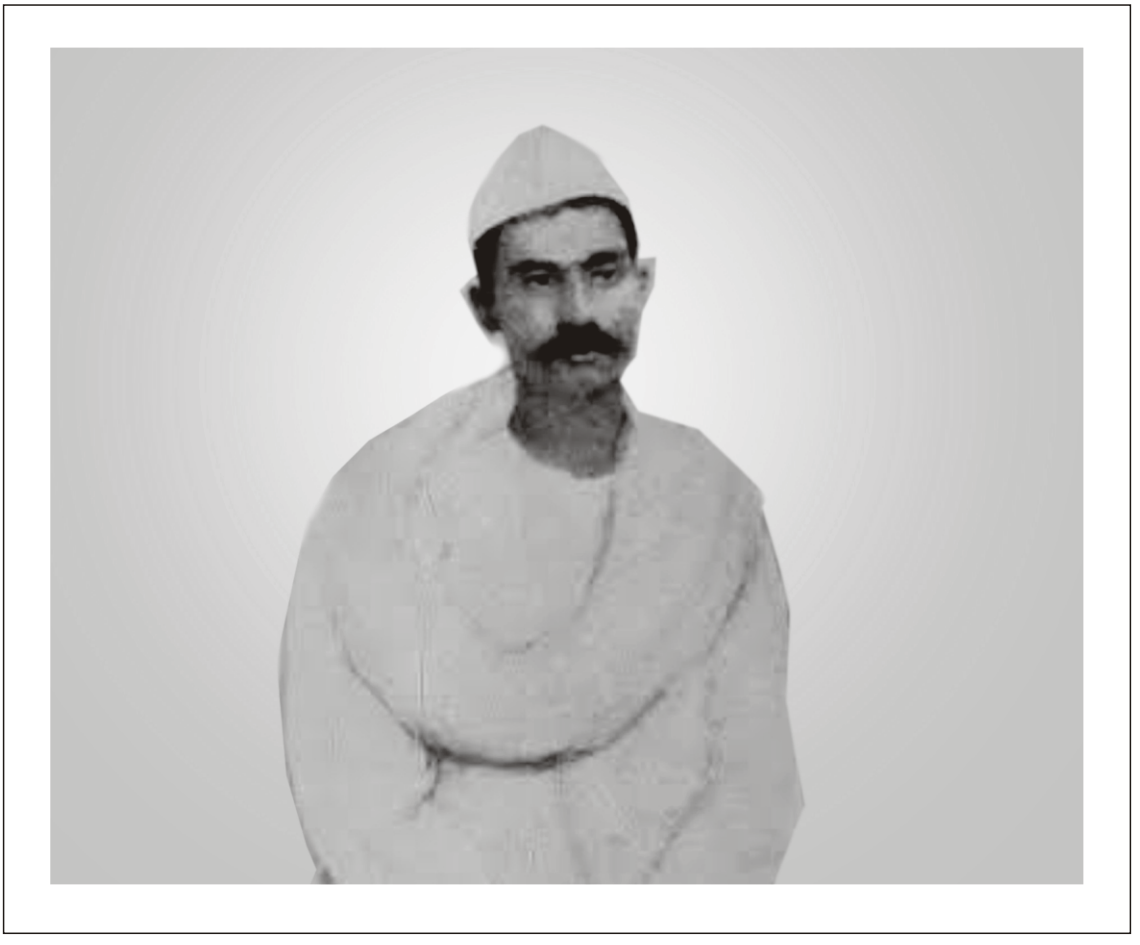
(c). Sales section provided stalls for selling Indian-made articles.

(d). Ayurvedic section exhibited Indian medicinal herbs and essences, a new feature introduced in 1924. Rajendra Prasad gave the opening address of the Swadeshi Exhibition.The exhibition promoted Indian industries, arts and culture, aligning with the Swadeshi spirit of the Congress.

The Gate of Swadeshi Exhibition

Spinning

Spinning played a significant role at the Congress Session at Belgaum. A special hall was constructed, equipped with spinning wheels and other accessories, to accommodate delegates who wanted to spin during the session. Satish Chandra Das Gupta from the Khadi Pratishthan in Calcutta delivered engaging lantern lectures, showcasing India's prosperity before British rule, the decline of its national industry, and the potential for revival through the Khaddar movement. Gandhi appreciated the thoughtful organization of these lectures, finding them both instructive and amusing. To promote spinning, competitions were held during the session, with prizes awarded to the winners. Gandhi emphasized the importance of making spinning competitions a permanent feature. Gandhi's vision of spinning was far beyond just a practical skill. He saw it as a symbol of India's struggle for independence and a way to promote self-sufficiency and economic freedom.



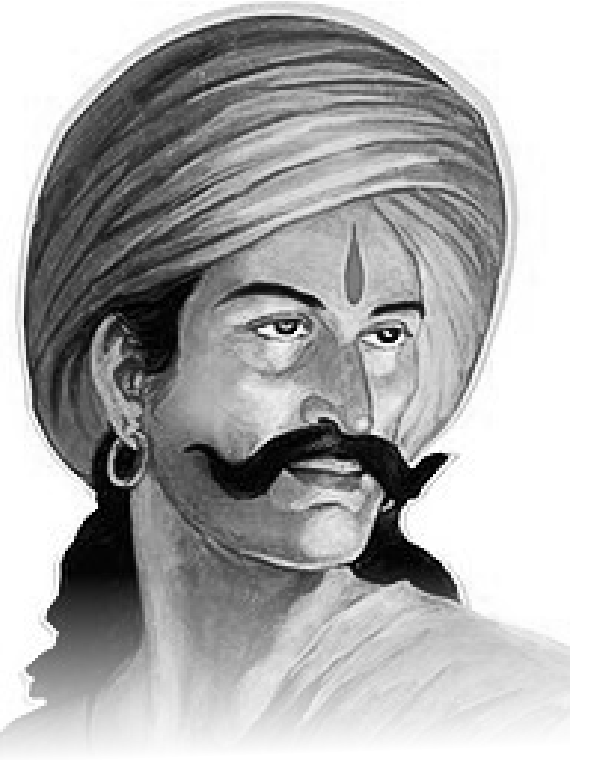
Rajendra Prasad addressed the opening ceremony of Swadeshi Exhibition

The Workers of Exhibition

The Role of Theatre

The Congress Session featured a series of nationalist plays to prepare people psychologically for the forthcoming session. These plays aimed to instill patriotism, promote national unity, and spread awareness about the freedom struggle. Some notable plays included "Pavitra Khadi", highlighting the importance of hand-spun and hand-woven khadi clothing, a key aspect of Gandhi's swadeshi movement. "Kittur Chennamma" was another play based on the life of Kittur Chennamma, the queen of Kittur who fought against the British East India Company. "Sangoli Rayanna told the story of Sangoli Rayanna, a senior commander of the Kittur military from Belgaum He was hanged by the British after being betrayed by the henchmen of local landlords. These nationalist plays played a vital role in promoting patriotism and fostering a sense of national pride and identity. By leveraging the power of theatre, the Congress aimed to mobilize public support, create a sense of national consciousness, and ultimately to achieve independence from British rule.

Kittur Chennamma fought against the British East India Company



Sangoli Rayanna :
Peasant Leader and Commander

Musical Concert

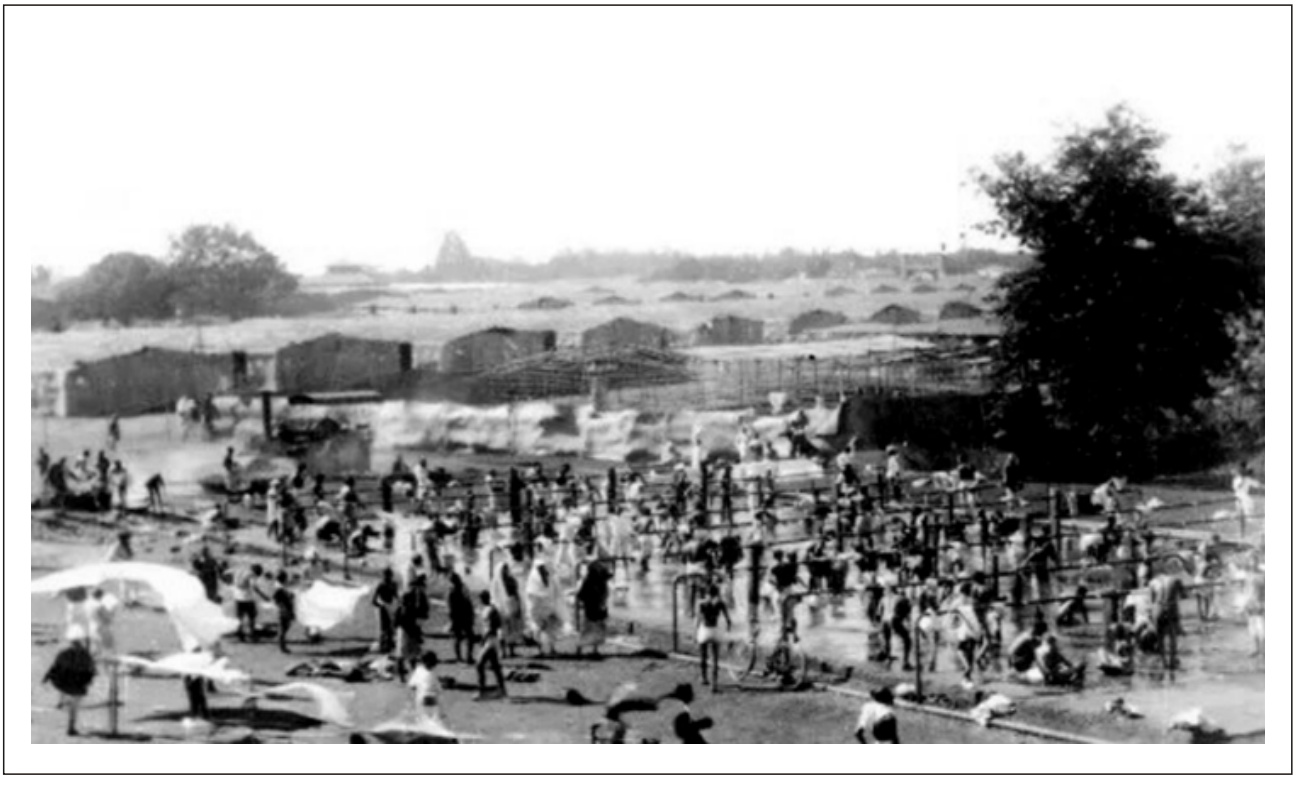
The Congress session featured a unique addition - a musical concert. This innovative feature received widespread acclaim from Congress leaders and delegates alike. The concert showcased Karnataka's renowned artistes, including the legendary Veene Sheshanna, who was the chief court musician of Mysore for over five decades. The Mysore Government extended its support by sending the Durbar musicians to perform at the conference. A dedicated concert hall was erected near the spinning hall to host the musical concerts. The event highlighted Kannad ragas and tunes, promoting India's rich cultural heritage. Mahatma Gandhi attended Veene Sheshanna's performance, listening intently for over 90 minutes. This gesture underscored Gandhi's belief in music's power to unite people and foster national pride.

Veene Sheshanna : Court musician of Mysore

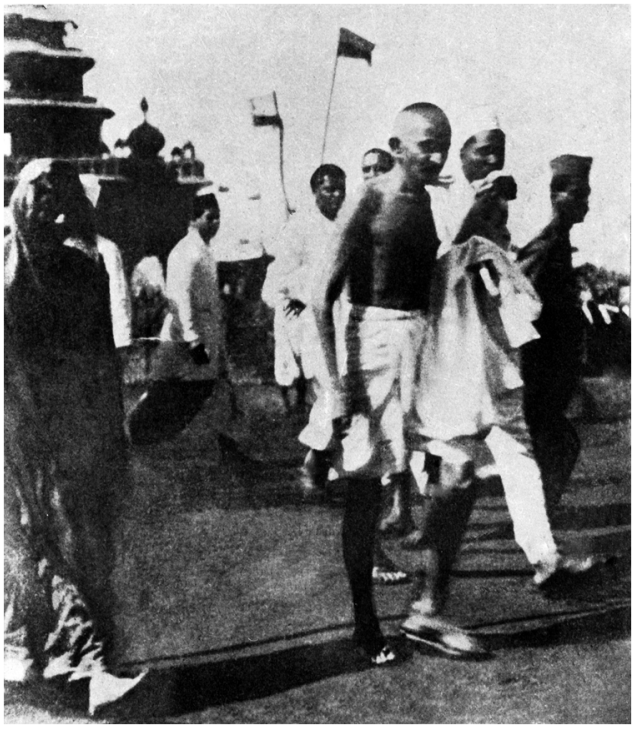
Pampa Sarovara : Water Reservoir

To meet the water demands of the 1924 Belgaum Congress Session, a water reservoir was constructed and named as Pampa Sarovara, evoking the sacred Hindu Lake located south of the Tungabhadra River in Koppal district near Hampi Karnataka. Given the absence of nearby wells or rivers, a massive well measuring 50 x 50 feet was dug to a depth of 40 feet, ensuring a reliable water supply. Equipped with steam pumps, the well fed massive tanks holding 30,000 gallons, which were then distributed throughout Vijayanagar via a network of pipes. This historic well, now known as the Congress Well, not only quenched the thirst of delegates but continues to supply water to the surrounding area. Its significance is duly recognized, and it is carefully preserved as a testament to the ingenuity of the past.

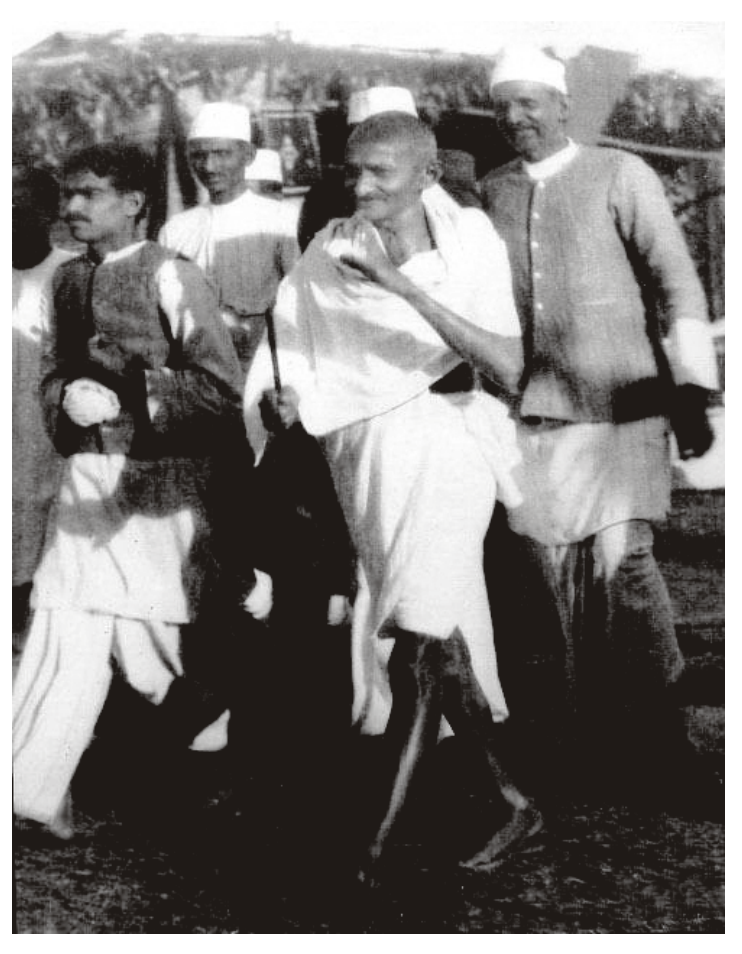
The Water Reservoir



The Bathing Place



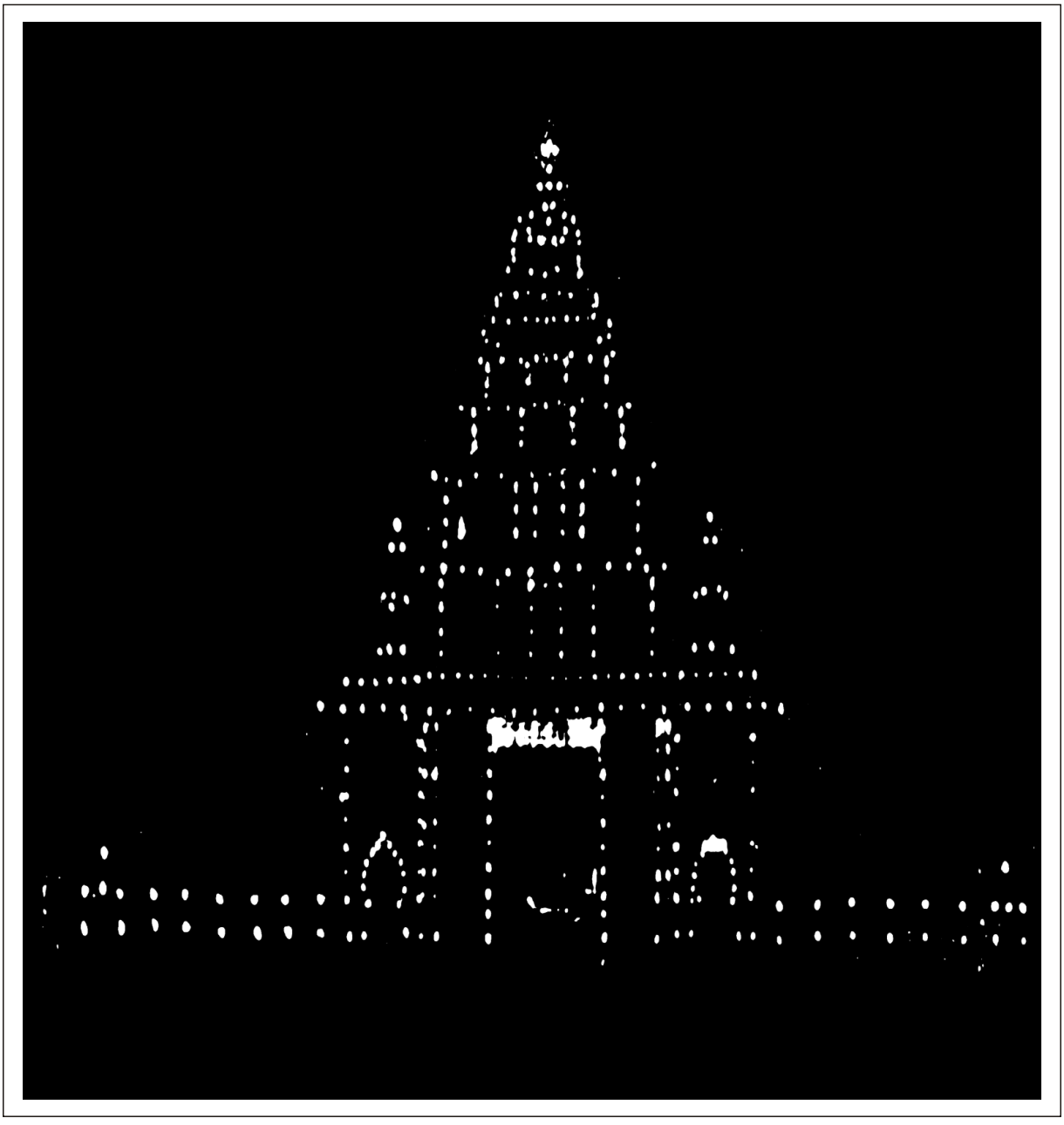
Gandhi with Sarojini Naidu infront of the Gopura



Evening walk of Gandhi with others

Lighting

The organizers of Belgaum Congress Session made elaborate lighting arrangements which transformed the venue into a festive atmosphere at night. The main Gopura entrance gate was illuminated with electric lights, made possible by special installations. Exhibition enclosures were also electrified, providing clear visibility of the displays. Other areas, such as the Pandal the Subjects Committee Hall, Offices, Volunteers' barracks, the President's camp were lit up using Petromax lights. Kitson lights illuminated the Kitchen, Dining Halls, Roads and other public spaces. Mean while, Dietz lanterns provided lighting for the Delegates' quarters.

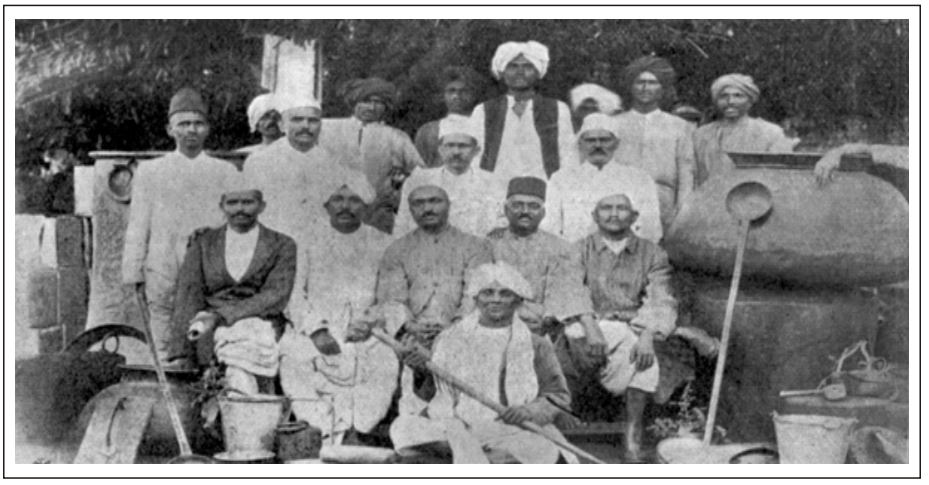


The Night view of Gopura

Workers' Group

Food Committee

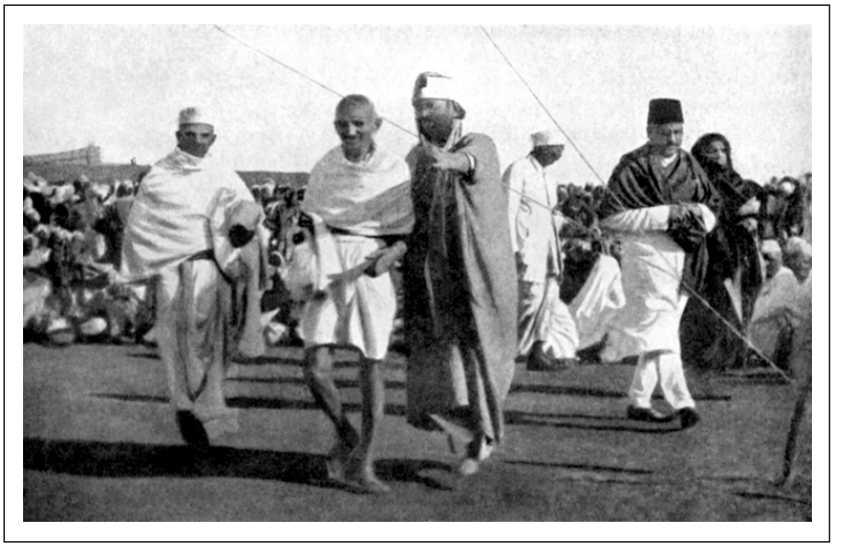
The Food Committee comprising 15 members, with Vamana Rao Iranade as Secretary, oversaw the food arrangements for the delegates of the session. The workers of the Food Committee were primarily volunteers from the Hindustani Seva Dal, who underwent proper training by the committee members offered seamless service to the delegates. To cater to the needs of the delegates, the committee set up a central general kitchen serving meals in the traditional Karnatak style and a massive dining hall measuring 500 x 100 feet, accommodating a large number of delegates. The provision of separate kitchens for provinces that desired to have their own arrangements, showcased the committee's commitment and sensitivity to catering to diverse needs of delegates. A conveniently located store supplying provisions at cost price, ensuring that delegates had access to essential items. The Food Committee's efforts ensured that the delegates' culinary needs were met, allowing them to focus on the session's proceedings.



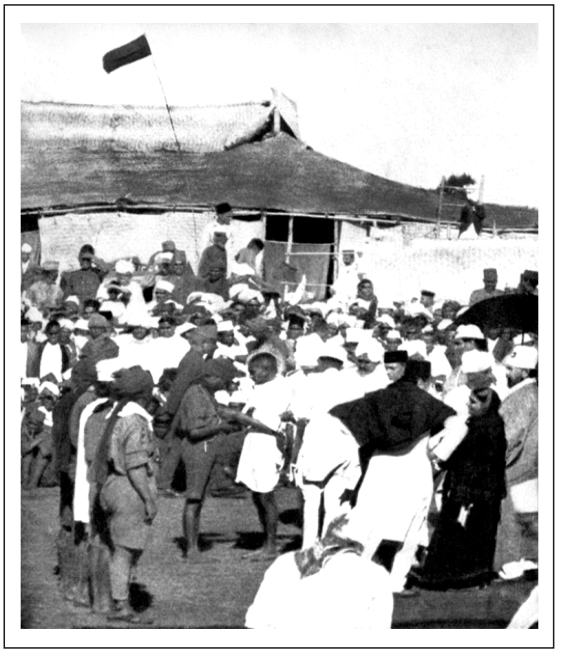
The Workers of Food Committee

The Volunteers

The Volunteer organisation was a remarkable feature of the Belgaum Congress, showcasing the dedication and hard work of its members. Dr. N.S. Hardikar played a pivotal role in preparing an elaborate scheme for securing trained volunteers, despite facing financial constraints. The volunteer force consisted of 1156 members, including 817 Sahayaks, 141 Sahayikas (lady volunteers) and 198 Scouts. All these volunteers were recruited from Karnataka and Kannada residents of Andhra, Maharashtra, and Bombay. About 275 Sahayaks received full-time training in specially designed camps, while an equal number attended instructional classes conducted by experienced volunteers. These volunteers took on various responsibilities, including crowd and traffic control, night patrols, and guard duties, performing their tasks commendably under the guidance of their captain and officers.



Gandhi with Mahomad Ali and other leaders in the volunteer camp

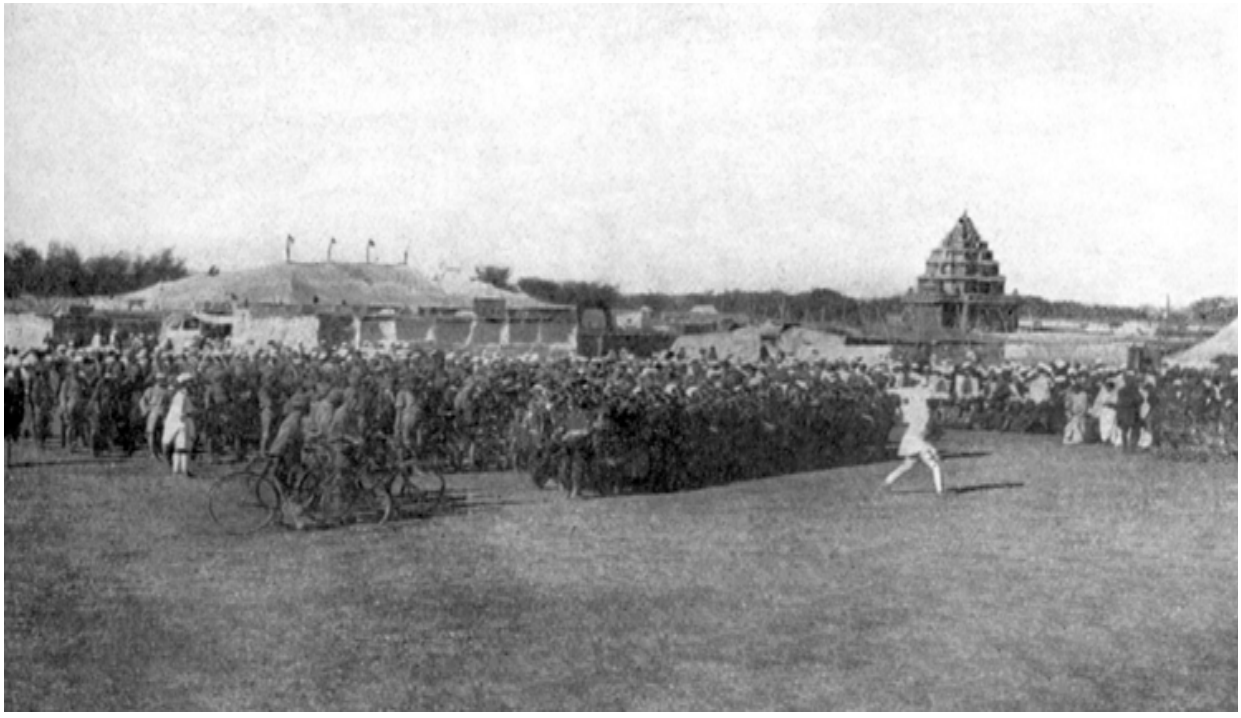


Gandhi honouring the volunteers

Dr. N. S. Hardikar

Dr. N. S. Hardikar was a medical graduate, enthusiastic Congress volunteer, and a close associate of prominent leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru was the Commander of The volunteer Corps of the Congress session. Inspired by Tilak and Gandhi, he dove head first into the freedom struggle. During his time in America, Hardikar worked closely with Lala Lajpat Rai, serving as his secretary and sub-editor of Young India. He played a pivotal role in organizing the Hindustani Seva Dal in 1923, with Jawaharlal Nehru as its President and Hardikar as its Secretary. Hardikar's contributions to the Seva Dal were immense. He helped to establish the organization, which aimed to create trained volunteers for the Congress. His leadership skills earned him the status of a youth icon, and his volunteers played a crucial role in managing the Belgaum Congress session, handling tasks like guest management, kitchen duties, and sanitation. The Seva Dal's head office was initially set up in Hubli before being shifted to Bagalkot in Bijapur district. Hardikar's legacy extends beyond his contributions to the freedom struggle; he also worked towards promoting communal amity.

Dr. N. S. Hardikar : Commander of The volunteer Corps

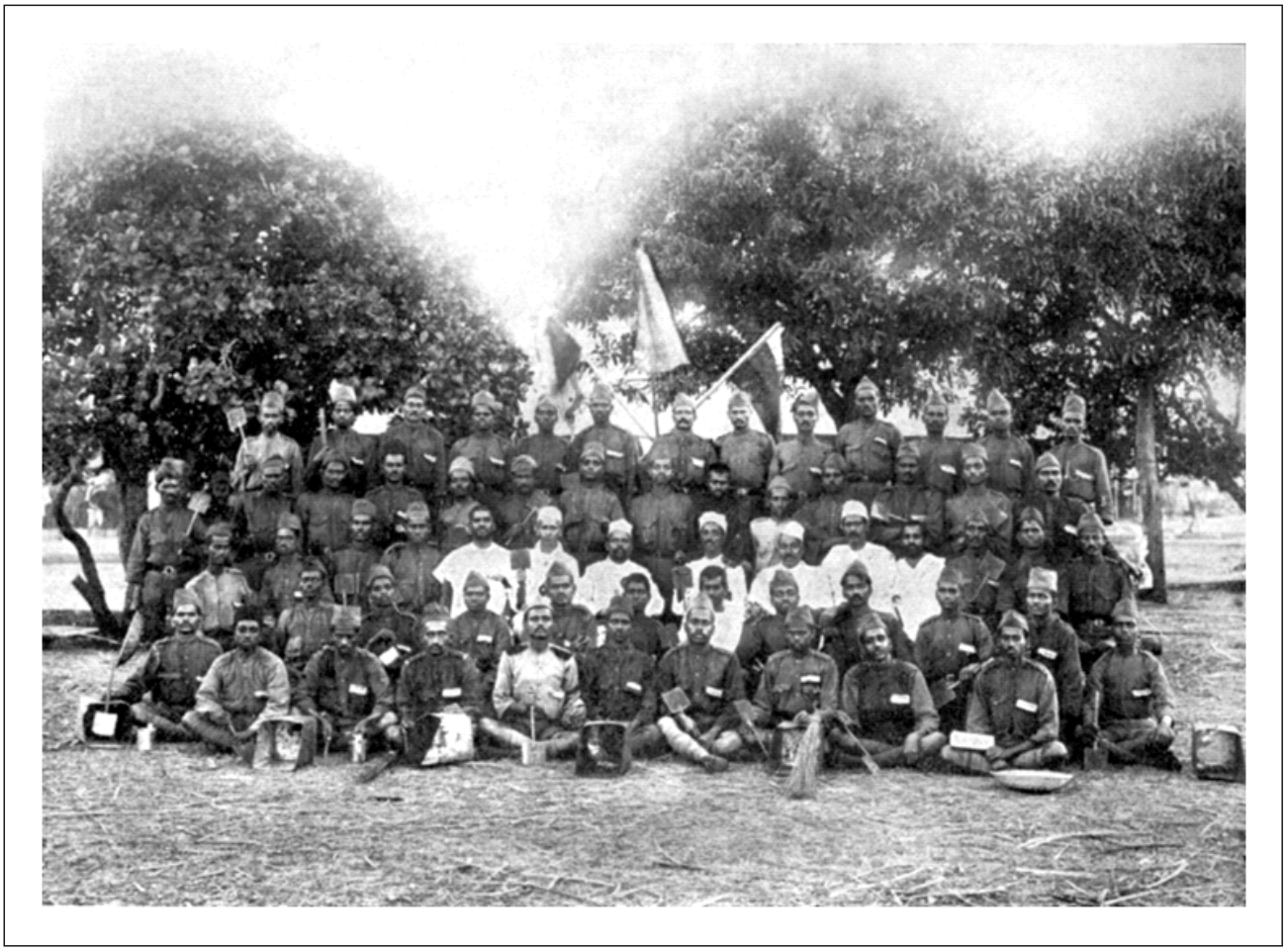


The volunteers' rally

Review of the volunteers

Volunteers and Workers in the Sanitary Department

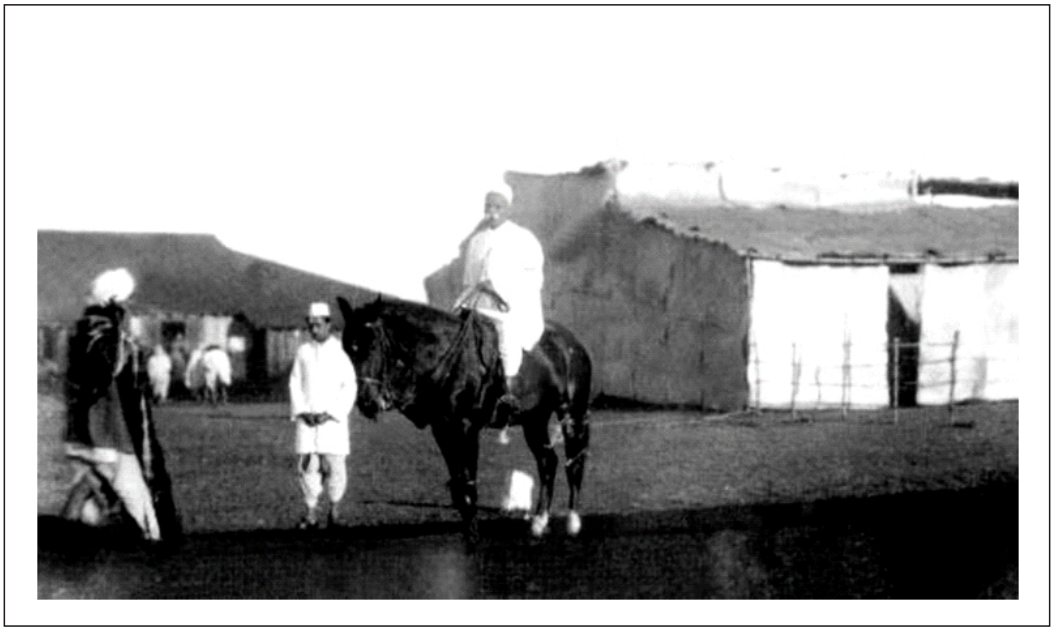
The Sanitary department's volunteers and workers played a crucial role in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene during the Congress Session. Under the leadership of Dr. Kelkar as Secretary and V. M. Bakre as a member, they ensured that toilets, bathrooms, kitchen rooms, function halls, and roads remained spotless throughout the session. These volunteers were carefully selected, trained, and instructed to prioritize sanitation. The municipal staff with a noble band of volunteers worked tirelessly, even taking on tasks that others might shy away from, like handling night soil disposal. This work was under the direct supervision of Kaka Kalelkar. Their dedication and willingness to take on these responsibilities earned them Gandhi's admiration, who considered their work "the noblest of all". Gandhi emphasized the importance of sanitary work, stating that it should be regarded as the foundation of all volunteer training. The success of the Sanitary department was the result of team work and the impact that dedicated volunteers can have in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene.



Volunteers and Workers of the Sanitary department

Supervision of Arrangements

The Congress session in Belgaum was a historic event that required meticulous planning and execution. Gangadharrao Deshpande, as the Chairman of the Reception Committee, played a pivotal role in supervising the arrangements. He went above and beyond, literally, by riding a horse around the 80-acre venue to ensure everything was in order. The horse, brought from his native village Hudli, became a symbol of his dedication and energy. Deshpande's biographer, R.S. Naryan, described the sight of the elderly Deshpande riding around the venue as "a strange but pleasing spectacle". His vitality and enthusiasm were so impressive that Rajendra Prasad remarked, "Old Gangadhar rao Deshpande moved about on horse back like a young man and supervised the work".



Gangadharrao Deshpande on horseback overseeing the arrangements
Pundalik Katagade is standing

Second Day's Proceedings

The second day of the 39th Indian National Congress session resumed on December 27th, 1924, with Mahatma Gandhi presiding over the proceedings. The day began with volunteers singing "Vande Mataram" and the State Anthem in Kannada, followed by a beautiful Hindi song sung by Harendra Chattopadhyaya. They were well-received, and the assembly cheered enthusiastically. As the President took the rostrum, the House erupted in cheers, and shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" filled the air. At 11:20 am, Gandhi moved the first condolence resolution, expressing apologies for not including it in the first day's proceedings. The Congress recorded its sorrow and sympathy for the bereaved family, followed by other resolutions.

Key Resolutions of Congress Session

The 1924 Belgaum Congress Session was a landmark event in India's fight for freedom, marked by several key resolutions. Mahatma Gandhi moved the first resolution, a condolence resolution to pay tribute to individuals who had passed away, which was carried unanimously after a minute of silent prayer. The second resolution, moved by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, endorsed an agreement between pro-changers and no-changers and spinning franchise, setting the tone for the session's focus on unity and constructive work.

The following are the highlights of the resolutions

Unity in the freedom struggle and Spinning Franchise

The Belgaum session passed a resolution promoting unity between the Congress and the Swaraj Party. Further it endorsed the suspension of Non-co-operation Movement as a national program except in in so far as it relates to the refusal to use or wear cloth made out of India, spread of hand-spun and hand-woven khadi, promotion of unity between different communities especially Hindus and Muslims and removal of untouchability. By amending the constitution, it was made compulsory for Congress members to wear khadi and contribute to yarn production at least 20,000 yards of yarns per year for the promotion of khadi. It also appealed to princes, wealthy classes, and merchants to support the khadi movement.

Appreciation of Services

The Congress appreciated the services rendered to Indians overseas in Burma and the service rendered to the settlers of Kenya by Mr. Vaze of the Servants of India and Pandit Banarsidas Chaturvedi.

Condemnation of Communal Tension

The Congress condemned the communal violence between Muslims and Hindus at Kohat and Gulburga, expressing sympathy for the sufferers in the Gulbarga riots and condemning the desecration committed on the places of worship in that town.

Removal of Untouchability

The Congress passed a resolution to protect the interest and social development of the depressed classes of society. It urged Congress workers to devote greater attention to the social upliftment of the depressed classes by providing access to public places like temples, wells, shops, hotels and schools.

Support to Overseas Indians

The Congress expressed sympathy to overseas Indian settlers at Burma, South Africa, and Kenya fighting for social justice with the Imperial governments in those countries.

The Akali Movement

The Congress appreciated the Akali Movement, which began in Amritsar, Punjab, in 1920 as a mass movement against the British government. The movement aimed to eradicate untouchability and fought for the entry of low-caste Sikhs into temples.

Support to National Education

The Congress appealed to all Provincial Congress Committees to set up National Schools for the welfare of society. These schools aimed to eradicate untouchability, promote spinning and weaving through education, impart education through the mother tongue, and provide training in physical education and self-defense.

Drug and Opium Traffic

The Congress urged the government to ban the use of drugs and opium by youths, citing its negative impact on morality and society.

Paid National Service

The Congress realized the need for volunteers for national service. They witnessed the work done by volunteers and the Hindustani Seva Dal in the session and its contribution to making the session a grand success.

The congress decided to convene the 40 th session at Kanpur in U.P.

Prominent Speakers of Key Resolutions

Deshbandu Chittaranjan Das

Pandit Motilal Nehru

Maulana Mohammad Ali

Shrinivasrao Koujalgi

Maulana Hajarat Mohani

N. C. Kelkar

Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu with others at the concluding session of the Congress

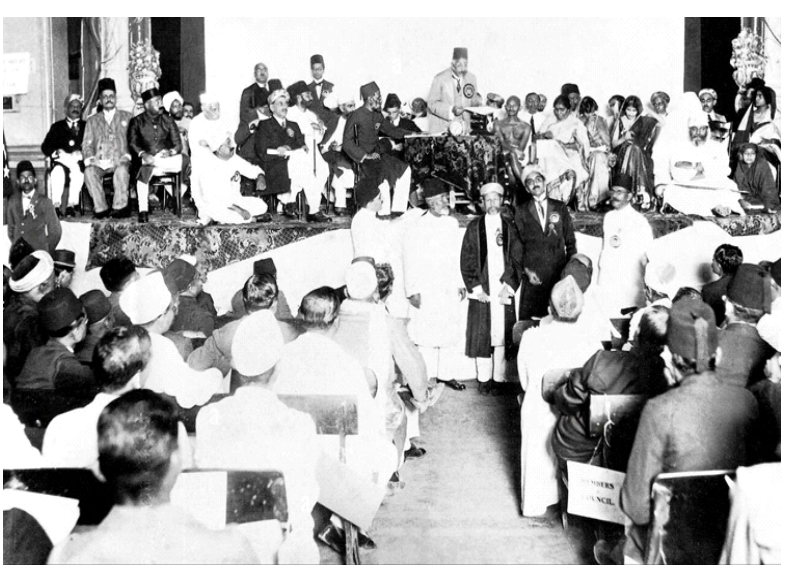
The Concluding Session

The 39th Indian National Congress session concluded on December 27th, with Motilal Nehru, Secretary of the Swaraj Party, conveying a heartfelt vote of thanks to the esteemed gathering. This gesture was significant, as it aimed to bridge the gap and settle differences between the Swaraj Party leaders, C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. Pandit Motilal Nehru while proposing a vote of thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, acknowledging the significance of the resolution passed. He said, "I expect you to say by passing it that you agree to all that Mahatmaji said and that you willingly and cheerfully undertake the responsibility which he has laid upon you."Nehru emphasized that passing this resolution was not just a mere ceremony, but a commitment to uphold the principles outlined by Gandhi.Nehru expressed his confidence that the gathering would respond to Gandhi's call to action, made in his concluding remarks, by passing the vote of thanks. This call was directed to the Swarajists, No-changers, and all others concerned, urging them to perform their undertaking in spirit and matter.The proposal was met with loud applause and vociferous shouts of "Mahatma Gandhiki jai," ultimately leading to the closure of the Congress proceedings at 5:45 pm.

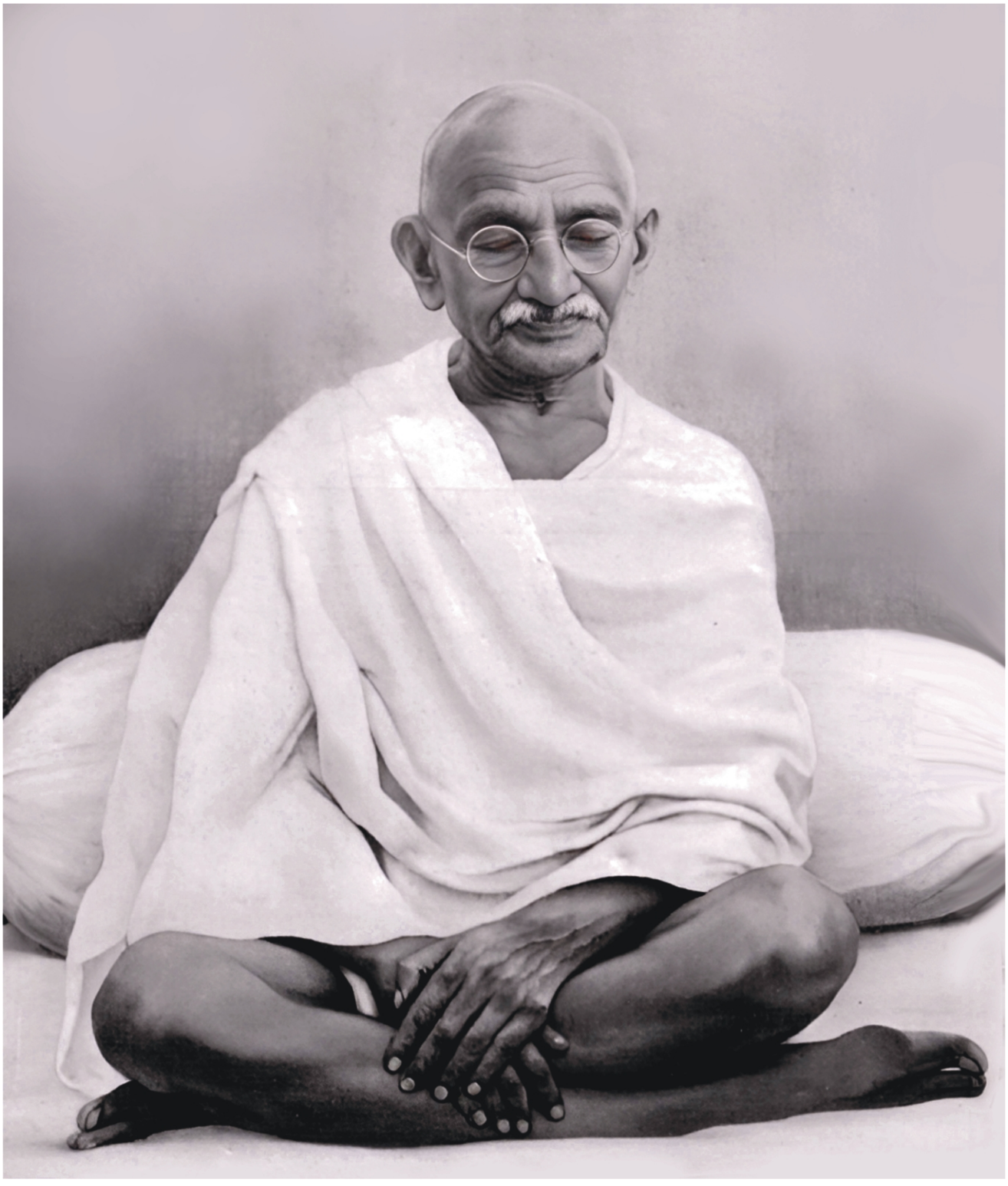
Conclusion

The 39th Indian National Congress session, held in Belgaum in 1924, was a historic and politically significant event in India's struggle for independence. The session was also notable for being the only Congress session presided over by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's leadership during the session symbolized his growing influence within the Congress and the broader Indian independence movement. The Belgaum session marked a significant milestone in the Indian National Congress's history, as it demonstrated the party's commitment to non-violent struggle and constructive work. The session's emphasis on unity and collective action paved the way for future movements in India's struggle for freedom from the British yoke.

Gandhi on the way to the railway station, accompanied by Gangadharao Deshpande



Congress President M. K. Gandhi, with Motilal Nehru, Dr. Kitchlew, M. A. Jinnah, Mahomed Ali, Sarojini Naidu and Shaukhat Ali at the Annual session of the Muslim League held at Globe Theatre, Mumbai, when he addressed the House on December 31, 1924



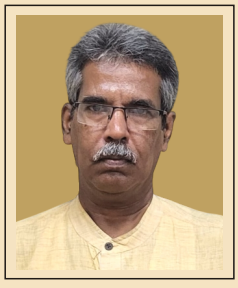
Mahatma Gandhi : The visionary leader who spiritualized Indian politics

"This illustrated account of the Belagavi session, written and compiled by Siby K. Joseph and Basavaraj N. Akki, is a very useful and timely publication in the event's centenary year. It is often said that a picture is more valuable than a thousand words since visual information is easier for our brains to process and comprehend. This pictorial narration allows us to see how carefully the event was organized. It gives the reader important glimpses into Karnataka's role in the national movement, and will be very valuable to the students. The authors need to be commended for undertaking this work with passion and devotion".

John S. Moolakkattu
Chief Editor
Gandhi Marg - Journal of Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi

"The 1924 Belgaum Session of the Indian National Congress, presided over by Mahatma Gandhi, marked a pivotal moment in India's struggle for independence. As the country navigated the complexities of colonial rule, the Belgaum Session became a crucial juncture in the quest for freedom. In this pictorial exposition, the book delves into the circumstances that led to Gandhi's acceptance of Presidentship of the session, the organizational details of a session that required meticulous planning and execution, the key resolutions that were passed- and much more. The narrative provides a good glimpse of Gandhi's leadership and his vision of non-violent resistance and constructive work. It also affords a deeper understanding of how Gandhi's philosophy and strategy shaped the trajectory of India's independence movement, setting the stage for revolutionary change in the future".

D. Jeevan Kumar
Former Director, Centre for Gandhian Studies, Bangalore University
and Managing Trustee, Sarvodaya International Trust.



Siby K. Joseph is currently serving as Director, Sri Jamnalal Bajaj Memorial Library and Research Centre for Gandhian Studies, Sevagram Ashram Pratishthan, Wardha, Maharashtra. His Ph.D. is in Gandhian Thought and Development Studies. As an academic and researcher, he edited a number of books and published several books, monographs and articles.

Basavaraj N. Akki is an archivist and historian engaged in research studies relating to history and has number of publications to his credit. He completed UGC and ICHR Major Research Projects. His Ph.D. is in history. He served as Professor of History, Government First Grade College, Dandeli, Karnataka.

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